



Daily Report

Friday, 16 October 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 October 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:32 P.M., 16 October 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Aluminium: Manufacturing Industries

Jane Stevenson:

[\[102932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the value of the aluminium sector to the UK economy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Aluminium is widely used in many sectors of the economy, including transport (automotive and aviation), construction, manufacturing equipment, consumer durables and electronics, as well as food, beverage, and medical packaging. In 2018, the aluminium sector had an estimated turnover of £1.9 billion and contributed around £200 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy. It directly supports 4,100 jobs and many more indirectly. Aluminium is a lightweight material and infinitely recyclable, and so has significant potential to contribute to the UK's net zero objectives.

The Government recognises that it is crucial for the aluminium sector to continue providing essential materials to support the economy and the Department is committed to ongoing engagement with the aluminium industry. Input from aluminium firms informed the Government's guidelines to help manufacturing businesses to operate safely during the pandemic, and the industry has also been widely consulted on changes affecting the sector as a result of the UK's exit from the EU.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Chi Onwurah:

[\[102794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of the advance purchases of covid-19 vaccines have been bought from manufacturers based in the UK.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK Government has secured access to two vaccines being manufactured in the UK:

- 100 million doses of the vaccine being developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca.
- 60 million doses of the vaccine being developed by GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur.

The UK Government has also secured access to the vaccine being developed by Valneva, who are based in France but will manufacture the vaccine in Scotland.

■ Fireworks: Sales

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[102952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of banning firework sales to discourage private gatherings during bonfire season whilst the covid-19 outbreak remains ongoing.

Paul Scully:

The Government does not have any plans to ban the sale of fireworks, but people must be careful to safely use fireworks at home and follow their instructions for use. People must follow the coronavirus restrictions in their local area. Information on local COVID alert levels across the UK can be found on the GOV.UK website.

■ Flexible Working

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[102839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage people to achieve a better work-life balance.

Paul Scully:

Since June 2014, all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service with their employer have the Right to Request Flexible Working, where employees can request a change to their hours, working patterns or to work from home. We want to make it easier for people to work flexibly and in our manifesto, we committed to further encouraging flexible working by consulting on making it the default unless employers have good reasons not to.

We realise that managing a work-life balance is particularly important for certain individuals. One such group is those with caring responsibilities. That is why the Government has consulted on proposals to introduce a new employment right to one week of additional leave for unpaid carers – to support working carers with balancing their employment and caring responsibilities. The consultation closed on 3rd August and received over 800 responses. We are now analysing the responses and the Government will issue its response in due course, setting out the way forward.

■ Parental Leave

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[102836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage more new parents to take up shared parental leave.

Paul Scully:

Shared Parental Leave and Pay came into effect in December 2014 for the parents of children due or adopted from 5 April 2015. A marketing campaign comprising of PR, digital and advertising activity was conducted leading up to the scheme coming into effect, as well as significant stakeholder engagement and promotion through gov.uk.

In 2018, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Government Equalities Office ran a joint £1.5m campaign to promote the scheme and

encourage take-up. Again, this was a multi-channel campaign which made use of digital website advertising, targeted social media advertising, posters in train stations and on commuter routes, and digital content shared through both Government and external partners' channels. To help parents to understand and make use of the scheme, a suite of new tools and guidance was published at the same time.

In order to maintain momentum, we ran a further marketing campaign in 2019, focussing on social media channels and promoting the scheme through trusted partners.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is currently developing an online tool to help parents plan Shared Parental Leave and Pay. This will help parents to understand their entitlements and facilitate discussions with employers, thereby encouraging more new parents to use the scheme. The tool will be available on GOV.UK early in 2021.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Coronavirus: Death

Jon Trickett:

[\[100292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths due to covid-19 per head of the population there have been in each NHS Trust area since 4 July 2020.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ100292 [PQ100292.pdf]

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[101992\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the finding of the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, published on 9 October 2020, that the average age of death from covid-19 is 82.4 years; and if he will make a statement.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ101992 [PQ101992.pdf]

■ Employment: Greater Manchester

Barbara Keeley: [\[102013\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK and EU failing to agree a deal on their future relationship on employment in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Salford.

Barbara Keeley: [\[102014\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the value of free trade with the EU to the UK fishing industry.

Barbara Keeley: [\[102015\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK and the EU failing to agree an agreement on their future relationship by the end of the transition period on the UK fishing industry.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government remains committed to working to reach an agreement with the EU.

Whether or not the UK and EU reach agreement, the UK will be an independent coastal state outside of the Common Fisheries Policy from 31 December 2020. The UK will no longer be bound by the EU's outdated and unfair method of sharing fishing opportunities. I refer the hon. Member to the [press statement released](#) on 13 October 2020 by the Fisheries Minister on this issue.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ59762](#) on 23 June 2020.

DEFENCE

■ Aircraft Carriers: Deployment

Jamie Stone: [\[102899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the National Audit Office's report entitled Carrier Strike - Preparing for deployment, published in June 2020.

Jeremy Quin:

The NAO report, Carrier Strike - Preparing for Deployment, highlighted progress made and the Department remains on track to achieve a successful Carrier Strike Deployment in 2021.

■ Armed Forces: Pastoral Care

Crispin Blunt: [\[100276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking through the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy to modernise pastoral support services for (a) the armed forces and (b) non-religious/humanist personnel.

Johnny Mercer:

The Integrated Review will be published later in the year. Whilst I cannot pre-empt the contents of the review, I can give assurances that the well-being of the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces is of the utmost importance. Several active faith and belief networks, including humanism, have already been developed, and the Ministry of Defence pastoral support services will continue that important work.

■ Armed Forces: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**John Healey:****[102676]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cases of compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder have been awarded by his Department to armed forces personnel under the War Pensions Scheme in each year from 2000 to 5 April 2005.

Johnny Mercer:

The information requested is being collated. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

John Healey:**[102677]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cases of compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder have been awarded by his Department to armed forces personnel under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to date.

Johnny Mercer:

It is not possible to reliably determine awards made specifically for PTSD, as individuals who claimed for PTSD may have been awarded compensation for a range of mental illnesses. However, from the electronic records available it has been determined that as at 31 March 2020 some 3,739 awards had been made for PTSD under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) between 06 April 2005 and 31 March 2020.

Defence Statistics publish annual National Statistics on the AFCS. The most recent update was published in June 2020 (as at 31 March 2020) on the Gov.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-statistics-index>

John Healey:**[102678]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cases of compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder have been awarded by his Department to armed forces personnel through civil claims to date.

Johnny Mercer:

Since 1 April 2009, compensation has been paid out to 75 current or former service personnel in respect of PTSD claims. The cases consist of PTSD claims with a clinical negligence nature, ie the failure to diagnose and treat PTSD, as well as Service personal injury claims where PTSD is considered the incident injury.

■ Armed Forces: Visas

Jane Stevenson:

[\[102930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on visa charges for Commonwealth UK armed forces personnel applying for indefinite leave to remain.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government highly values the service of all members of the Armed Forces, including Commonwealth nationals and Gurkhas from Nepal. We recognise that settlement fees place a financial burden on Service personnel and their families wishing to settle in the UK after service. The Defence Secretary and the Home Secretary met in July to discuss this. We are continuing to work closely with the Home Office on this issue and the Ministry of Defence will be launching a public consultation in due course to consider how we can offer greater flexibility for these individuals and their families in future.

■ Defence Equipment: Manufacturing Industries

Mark Menzies:

[\[100950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to retain the skills held by the UK workforce in manufacturing military equipment.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK defence sector supports many thousands of highly-skilled roles across the UK and many of our leading defence suppliers have programmes in place to ensure they have the right skills to deliver defence programmes. Through the Defence Suppliers' Forum, we maintain a close dialogue with industry to understand their approach to the skills the defence sector requires and as part of the Enterprise Approach we are working with industry on how best to maintain skills in the sector. In addition, the Defence Growth Partnership, a joint Government-industry initiative, considers skills in areas which enable exports and competitiveness and has developed a Systems Engineering Masters Apprenticeship, an export career pathway and a digital skills framework.

In March 2020, I launched a cross-Government review into the UK's defence and security industrial sectors. These sectors are at the forefront of technology, creating new ways to defend against threats, and ensuring that we have the right mix of skills in the industrial base is a key part of that. Through this review we will ensure that the UK continues to have competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries that drive investment and prosperity across the Union, to underpin our national security now and in the future.

■ Military Aircraft: Aerospace Industry

Mark Menzies:

[\[100948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the UK's continued sovereign ability to manufacture complete military jets.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence conducts periodic reviews of the industrial capability necessary to preserve operational advantage and freedom of action. It was those reviews that informed the Combat Air Strategy published in 2018.

Further to this, in March 2020 I launched the Defence Security and Industrial Strategy (DSIS). Through this ongoing cross-Government review into the UK's defence and security industrial sectors, we will identify how we can enhance our strategic approach to ensure we have competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries that underpin our national security and drive investment and prosperity across the Union now and in the future.

Warships: Shipbuilding**Mark Menzies:**[\[100949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the UK's continued sovereign ability to manufacture complete naval vessels.

Jeremy Quin:

The 2017 National Shipbuilding Strategy sets out the Ministry of Defence's commitment to supporting the UK shipbuilding industry and protecting our assured capability to design, build, repair and integrate naval ships. The Type 26 Anti-Submarine Warfare frigate programme on the Clyde and the Type 31 general purpose frigate programme at Rosyth are a manifest example of our determination to maintain the UK's ability to deliver warships.

Further to this, through the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy review we will identify how we can enhance our strategic approach to ensure we have competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries that drive investment and prosperity across the Union.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Events Industry: Coronavirus****Sir David Evennett:**[\[100299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of Government support to the live events industry on that industry.

Caroline Dinenage:

No estimate is available currently for this but we will analyse the impact of the funds we have already announced. We are continuing to meet with live events stakeholders to provide support and guidance for venues to re-open and stage live events.

The Secretary of State announced an unprecedented £1.57 billion support package for the cultural sector which will benefit the live events sector by providing support to venues and many other cultural organisations to stay open and continue operating.

On Monday 12 October, the Government announced an investment of £257 million in 1,385 organisations including venues, festivals, theatres, museums and cultural organisations, through the [first tranche of Culture Recovery Fund: Grants programme](#), administered by the Arts Council. Over the coming weeks further Culture Recovery Fund awards will be announced - including round two of Grants under £1 million, grants over £1 million, and the Capital Kickstart and Repayable Finance programmes.

The Chancellor has announced the Winter Economy Plan to protect jobs and support businesses over the coming months, once the existing Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme come to end. We are also offering businesses who face a drop in demand for their services and possible cash flow issues generous terms for the repayment of deferred taxes and government-backed loans.

We continue to engage with the sector to discuss the on-going challenges facing the industry.

■ **Exercise: Dudley North**

Marco Longhi:

[101321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what funding his Department has (a) made available and (b) allocated in 2020 within the Dudley North constituency to promote exercise and fitness.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sport England has had a number of public funds available in 2020, including their Small Grants Fund, Community Asset Fund, and Community Emergency Fund.

Sport England made 8 awards in the Dudley North constituency from January to June 2020, totalling £29,895. All 8 awards were through Sport England's Community Emergency Fund. Please note that this does not include awards in the period July to September which are yet to be published.

The £35 million Community Emergency Fund has delivered immediate financial support to those grassroots and physical activity clubs or community organisations most in need due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including those across the Dudley North constituency.

■ **Football: Coronavirus**

Grahame Morris:

[102759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had and with whom on the financial viability of English Football League Clubs while they are unable to generate matchday revenues.

Grahame Morris:

[102760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward proposals for a Premier League funded financial assistance scheme for English football clubs.

Nigel Huddleston:

Football clubs are the bedrock of our local communities and it is vital they are protected. That is why we have provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many football clubs have benefited from.

We have worked closely with football throughout the pandemic including getting the Premier League and English Football League back behind closed doors and continue to do so. We have been clear that we expect the game - where it can at the top tiers - to support itself. The Government will then focus our support on those in the sector most in need as a result of the October 1 decision not to readmit spectators.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Coronavirus

Kate Green:

[102786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of apprentices made redundant as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

We do not currently publish data on redundant apprentices. We are working with employers and providers to improve our understanding of the number of apprentices affected by redundancy.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Karin Smyth:

[100468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much was (a) raised by the Apprenticeship Levy and (b) spent by employers on apprenticeships in 2019-2020.

Gillian Keegan:

The department does not hold information on total levy collected. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is responsible for collecting the levy on behalf of the government. This information is held by HMRC and is published in their annual report and accounts, which can be found at HMRC Annual Report and Accounts. More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrcs-annual-report-and-accounts>.

In the 2019-20 financial year, £2.5 billion was paid into levy paying employer's accounts, this includes a 10% top-up and accounts for the English fraction adjustment.

Levy paying employers spent £950 million of funds on apprenticeship training from their apprentice service accounts in the 2019-20 financial year. Payments made out of accounts relate to the apprenticeships learning element only and exclude any other items that are not funded from employers' funds in their accounts, such as English and Maths training.

Apprenticeship ringfenced budget covers the cost of training that started pre-reforms as well as training of levy and non-levy employers. In the 2019-20 financial year this amounted to £1.9 billion.

Levy employers have 24 months to spend the levy paid into accounts, after which the funds will expire. We continue to work with large employers to improve the transfer process, making it easier for them to find smaller employers to transfer levy funds to, thus helping them maximise the amount of funding they will be able to transfer.

■ **Apprentices: Young People**

Robert Halfon:

[102761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of incentive payments for hiring new apprentices on the employment rate among 16-24 year old's since 1 August 2020.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow. To help employers offer new apprenticeships, they are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25 before 31 January 2021, in recognition of the particular impacts of COVID-19 on the employment prospects of this group, and £1,500 for new apprentices aged 25 and over. This is in addition to the existing £1,000 payment we already provide for new 16-18-year-old apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. The new payment means it is a great time for employers to offer new apprenticeship opportunities and take advantage of existing flexibilities to train their apprentices in a way that suits their needs.

Employers have been able to register to claim the incentive since 1 September. We are monitoring the take-up of the new payments and will assess their impact on apprenticeship starts to ensure it is helping employers to meet their skills needs and working for people of all ages.

■ **Assessments: Coronavirus**

Ian Lavery:

[101018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) stakeholders on cancelling examinations for (a) SATS, (b) GCSEs and (c) A Levels in the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to GCSE, AS and A level exams taking place next year. We are also preparing for primary assessments to take place in 2021, to allow us to understand the impact of COVID-19 and target ongoing support to those that need it most. The Department has been working closely with Ofqual, the exam boards, groups representing teachers, schools, colleges, students, and teaching unions to consider our approach to exams and other assessments next year.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, asked Ofqual in June to consider a short delay to the GCSE, A and AS level exam timetable in 2021, to free up additional teaching time. On 12 October, we announced the decision to delay the majority of exams by 3 weeks.

The Department is working with Ofqual to engage with the sector and other primary stakeholders to develop contingencies in the event that disruption as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak affects students' ability to sit exams. As part of these discussions the Secretary of State for Education has spoken to Ofqual, his counterparts in the devolved administrations, trade unions, to school leaders via our reference groups, as well as to senior multi-academy trust leaders. In addition, the Department has been in regular contact with Ofqual and exam Boards.

The Department also recognises that primary school pupils have missed a critical period of their education due to school closures in the 2019/20 academic year and are planning on the basis that statutory primary assessments will take place in 2020/21 to allow us to understand the impact of COVID-19 and target ongoing support to those that need it most. Those stakeholders noted above have also been consulted on this matter.

■ Care Leavers: Finance**Cat Smith:**[\[100445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of funding available to young people leaving care announced in 2019 has been allocated to initiatives which provide dedicated support for girls and young women as a named group; and what steps he is taking to monitor and evaluate the effect of that funding on girls and young women leaving care and experiencing poor mental health.

Vicky Ford:

In October 2019, during care leavers week, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced £19 million additional funding in financial year 2020-21 to support care leavers.

Of the additional funding, £10 million was allocated to local authorities to increase the resources available to them to implement Staying Put, which enables young people in foster care at age 18 to remain with their former foster carers until age 21. In total, £33 million will be allocated to local authorities to implement Staying Put this financial year.

Although Staying Close supports both young men and young women, some of the pilots are working with particular cohorts. For example, one of the pilots is supporting young women leaving a specialist children's home that accommodates young women who have been victims of child sexual exploitation, and a number of Staying Close participants are young parents. As well as the core Staying Close offer, a number of pilots also provide access to specialist mental health services.

The final £3 million funding was to provide extra funding for Virtual School Heads to enable them to provide additional support to care leavers in further education. Again, this funding will support all care leavers in further education and is not targeted at young women specifically.

■ Children and Young People: Health

Matt Western:

[102901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Solihull approach in improving children and adolescents' wellbeing and mental health; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing training for people working in education on that approach.

Vicky Ford:

We are aware of the work that is happening in Solihull to bring about improvements in children and adolescents' wellbeing and mental health.

The Department for Education has established a joint programme with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England to oversee the delivery of the proposals set out in our Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Services green paper. This includes the provision of mental health support teams (MHSTs) linked to groups of schools and colleges and the commitment to provide training for senior mental health leads in all state-funded schools and colleges in England.

Different areas are necessarily taking different approaches to implementation based on their own circumstances. The evaluation of the programme will inform further roll-out and how areas can learn from each other. 59 MHSTs are already established in 25 areas across the country with an additional 123 teams being set up in 57 areas this year, including two teams in Birmingham and Solihull. This will mean that the approach in that area will be able to feed into wider practice.

We have already made available a range of training for education staff on supporting pupils and on joint working. This includes our Link Programme training for all schools and colleges to help frontline health and education professionals work together effectively, and a range of specific training to support an effective response to the issues faced by children and young people as a result of COVID-19. Expert webinars in July reached thousands of education and local service staff.

Feedback suggests that in order to be effective, training and support needs to be flexible and reflect local circumstances. With this in mind, we have worked with DHSC, Health Education England, Public Health England and key voluntary sector

organisations, to launch Wellbeing for Education Return. This project, backed by £8 million, is training local experts to provide additional advice and resources for schools and colleges to help support pupil, student, parent and carer, and staff wellbeing, resilience and recovery in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown. The project includes flexibility to allow local authorities to adapt training, resources and follow-up support to suit their local contexts and will build on existing local approaches to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[102651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what parents' organisations are providing his Department with advice and opinions on the effect of Covid-19 restrictions on the health and welfare of school children.

Vicky Ford:

The department works with and uses information provided from a wide range of stakeholder organisations, including those that represent the views of parents, to inform its COVID-19 response. These include organisations such as Parentkind, National Network of Parent Carer Forums, Mumsnet, Barnardos, NSPCC, and the Disabled Children's Partnership (which includes Autistica, National Autistic Society and Ambitious about Autism).

■ Children: Day Care

Matt Western:

[102903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) availability and (b) cost of childcare.

Vicky Ford:

Since April 2020, we have been collecting weekly data from all English local authorities to monitor the availability of early years childcare. We collect and publish information on the number of open and closed early years providers as well as the number of children attending. This information contributes to our regular publication, 'Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak', which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Term-time attendance at early years settings has been increasing since September. On a typical day in the autumn term, we estimate attendance to be around 887,000 children, due to different and part-time patterns of childcare during the week. We estimate that 753,000 children attended early years settings on 8 October, which is approximately 85% of the usual daily level, and an increase of almost 340,000 from at the end of the summer term.

We are working hard to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on all parts of our society, including individuals and business. Data from a poll of 1000 parents of 0-4 year old children in May 2020 showed that weekly childcare costs at the time were most commonly the same as or less than before COVID-19 for children in key worker families or where the child is vulnerable. We continue to monitor the situation and have urged all childcare providers to be reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents, given the great uncertainty they have faced too. More details on the poll is available here: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/parents-0-4-year-olds-and-childcare-1st-june-2020>.

We are aware that some parents may have experienced a change in working hours or income as direct result of the COVID-19 outbreak. This is why we made temporary changes to ensure parents who would normally have been eligible for, and accessing, the Tax Free Childcare and 30 hours free entitlement remain eligible and can continue to access their childcare.

This includes parents and carers who will not meet the minimum income threshold (16 hours per week at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage) due to lower earnings as a direct result of COVID-19, who will be treated as meeting that test during the COVID-19 outbreak. This will continue to apply to parents and carers who need to apply for, or reconfirm, their 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare place until 31 October.

■ **Class Sizes: Coronavirus**

Ian Lavery:

[101017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on class sizes of school staff absence as a result of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

On 2 July, we published guidance to help schools prepare for all pupils, in all year groups, to return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term. The guidance can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

Ensuring that pupils, staff and other adults do not come into the school if they COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive in at least the last 10 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the school day is sent home, are essential actions to reduce the risk in schools and further drive down transmission of COVID-19.

Schools can continue to use supply teachers and other supply staff during this period as required. Schools may also need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff and use existing staff more flexibly.

Legislation in England limits infant class sizes to a maximum of 30 children per school teacher. There is no statutory limit for class sizes for older primary and secondary pupils. The organisation of classes is for the school to decide, based on local needs and circumstances.

■ Department for Education: Pay**Philip Davies:** [\[100317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the biggest pay rise given to someone in his Department was in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms in the last 12 months.

Nick Gibb:

The highest individual pay award in the last 12 months for an employee of the Department, including its Executive Agencies, in a) percentage and b) cash terms is:

a) 9.94% and

b) £6,250.

These figures relate to two different individuals and do not include staff who have received an increased salary following a promotion or change of role.

■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus**Bill Esterson:** [\[102773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to review the covid-19 regulations on overnight stays on school residential trips.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's educational visits advice is in line with guidance from Public Health England, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and will be reviewed again in November 2020.

■ Extended Services: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[102907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on wraparound care providers.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not hold a central register of all wraparound provision and so does not routinely collect data on providers.

However, our Regional Education and Children's Teams, comprising education and social care staff from both the department and Ofsted, are working closely with local authorities, and will act as a valuable source of intelligence on the sufficiency of wraparound childcare places in local areas. In addition, we have been in close communication with various stakeholders, including several wraparound providers since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak and we will continue this communication over the coming months.

We have ensured that, as of 4 July, wraparound care providers and other providers of out-of-school activities to children have been able to open, both on or away from school premises, with protective measures in place. We have published further updated guidance for providers who run before and after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school settings for children on the protective measures that should be put

in place to ensure they are operating as safely as possible. This is to also ensure that with the introduction of our new local COVID-19 alert levels, that wraparound childcare is able to remain open to support parents, and in particular critical workers, to continue to work. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

We also know that many schools operate their own breakfast and after school clubs, and they should be working to resume this provision, if they have not already. As part of our guidance to schools on full opening, we have provided schools with guidance to support them in reopening this valuable provision. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#wraparound-provision-and-extra-curricular-activity>.

■ GCE A-level

Kate Green:

[102787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that learners who wish to study a full A-Level in a single year have the opportunity to do so.

Nick Gibb:

It is for schools and colleges to decide how they timetable A levels and over what period of time they are taught.

As part of the wider COVID-19 skills recovery response, the Department will fund young people aged 18 and 19 for an additional programme of study of high value level 2 and 3 qualifications, for up to a year from September 2020, if they cannot find employment or work-based training. This includes the delivery of eligible A levels where these are delivered in a single year.

■ GCE A-level: Coronavirus

Jane Stevenson:

[102931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with awarding bodies on easing coursework requirements for A Level students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has been working closely with Ofqual and the exam boards on the approach to GCSE, AS and A level exams and assessments in 2021, to ensure that exams go ahead next year and students receive the qualifications they deserve. In August, Ofqual published a number of subject-level changes to exam and assessment requirements for A levels next year, including for non-exam assessment, in order to free up teaching time and take account of public health considerations.

On 12 October, the Government confirmed that no further subject-level changes to exams and assessments will be made for GCSEs, AS and A levels.

In confirming these changes, we are giving teachers, school and college leaders and students clarity on what will be assessed in exams next summer.

Students taking A levels in the autumn exam series will not be assessed on the basis of any non-exam assessment, including coursework, with the exception of those taking art and design qualifications.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[102906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department had with early years providers on the potential merits of a phased return in September 2020 for young children and their parents.

Vicky Ford:

Departmental officials and I are in regular contact with early years stakeholders across a wide range of matters.

As of 1 June, early years providers have been able to open to all children and since 20 July settings have been able to return to their normal group sizes.

We continue to work with the sector to understand how early years providers can best be supported to ensure that sufficient, safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now and for all families who need it in the longer term.

We have published guidance on actions for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

Early education plays a crucial role in early learning and development, but we recognise that some parents may be worried about sending their children back to nursery. Parents and childcare settings should always work together to make sure that children settle in well. For some children, it may be appropriate to build up their attendance over several weeks.

The School Admissions Code requires admissions authorities to provide for the full-time admission of all children in the September following their 4th birthday. Parents are able to defer the date that their child is admitted to school until later in the school year, but not beyond the point which their child reaches compulsory school age.

■ Redundancy: Coronavirus

Karin Smyth:

[100470]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring that people who are made redundant are able to access suitable

education and training between October 2020 and when the lifetime skills allowance is rolled out.

Gillian Keegan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has worked closely with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that a robust package of support is available for adults to learn and reach their potential in the labour market.

The government is providing £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) for the National Skills Fund.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, as part of his Lifetime Skills Guarantee, announced that for adults who do not currently have a level 3 qualification, we will be fully funding their first full level 3, focusing on the valuable courses that will help them get ahead in the labour market. The offer will be funded from the National Skills Fund and offered from April 2021.

The Prime Minister also announced digital bootcamps to support local regions and employers to fill in-demand vacancies by providing valuable skills. Adults in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Lancashire, and Liverpool City Region can now register their interest to take part in the digital bootcamps. In early 2021 the digital bootcamps will also be available in Leeds City Region, Heart of the South West and Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. We are planning to expand the bootcamps to more of the country from spring 2021 and we want to extend this model to include other technical skills training.

Alongside the National Skills Fund, the department has been working to provide further support in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. In his Summer Economic Update, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced investment of over £500 million to deliver a package of support for people to access the training and develop the skills they will need to go on to high-quality, secure and fulfilling employment. The Skills Recovery Package included:

- Apprenticeships: A new payment of £2,000 to employers in England for each new apprentice they hire who is aged 24 or below, and a £1,500 payment for each new apprentice they hire who is aged 25 and over, from 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2021.
- Traineeships: £111 million to triple the scale and reform traineeships for those aged 16 - 24 (25 with an Education, Health and Care plan): with additional funding available to providers in 2020-21 to support 30,000 new places. We have also introduced, for the first time, payments of £1,000 per trainee for employers who offer new or additional work placements (up to 10 trainees).
- Careers information, advice and guidance: £32 million over 2 years to help 269,000 more people of all ages receive advice from the National Careers Service.
- Sector-based work academy programme (SWAP): £17 million to triple the number of SWAP placements in the 2020/21 financial year, enough funding to support an

extra 40,000 job seekers with additional training opportunities and the chance of a job.

- £101 million for school / college leavers to study high value courses when there are not employment opportunities available to them.

In addition, the recently announced expansion of The Skills Toolkit means that people can now choose from over 70 courses, covering digital, adult numeracy, employability and work readiness skills, which have been identified as the skills employers need the most. These courses will help people stay in work, or take up new jobs and opportunities.

In response to COVID-19, the Department for Work and Pensions has also established an alternative service to their usual face to face offer. People will be able to access redundancy help and job search advice on the department's new Job Help campaign website. There is also information on GOV.UK and updated information packs provided to employers to help them signpost employees to the support that is available. The support available includes:

- Connecting people to jobs in the labour market through our Find a Job website, virtual jobs fairs, sector-based work academy programmes and mentoring circle opportunities.
- Help with job search including CV writing, interview skills, where to find jobs and how to apply for them.
- Help to identify transferable skills and skills gaps (linked to the local labour market).

In addition to this, the new Kickstart scheme is underway. This is a £2 billion programme which will create thousands of new jobs for young people aged between 16-24 who will be offered 6 month work placements with wages paid by the UK government.

The government appreciates the importance of adult education to improving people's life chances. We will continue to explore options within adult education to aid the post COVID-19 recovery.

■ Schools: Bosworth

Dr Luke Evans:

[100552]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support schools in Bosworth constituency to build new (a) classrooms and (b) other education facilities.

Nick Gibb:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places sits with local authorities. We provide funding for all the places that are needed, based on local authorities' own data. Local authorities can use this funding to provide places in new schools, or through expansions of existing schools, and can work with any school in their local area, including academies and free schools.

The Department does not collect information at parliamentary constituency level, only at local authority and at sub-local authority planning area level. Bosworth is within the local authority of Leicestershire. Leicestershire has been allocated £139.2 million to provide new school places from 2011-2022, and there are now 5,819 more places than there were in 2010. The next set of basic need allocations, for places needed in September 2023, will be determined as part of the Spending Review.

In addition, we have allocated £9.5 billion in condition funding since 2015 to maintain and improve the school estate, including an extra £560 million this financial year. This funding is provided through an annual school condition allocation to responsible bodies, such as local authorities, large academy trusts and voluntary aided bodies. Smaller academy trusts, sixth form colleges and other voluntary aided schools are able to bid into the Condition Improvement Fund each year.

Capital allocations are published at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding>. For the financial year 2020-21, Leicestershire local authority was allocated £3.4 million to invest in its maintained schools, including schools in Bosworth. Large academy trusts and voluntary aided bodies receive their own allocations, but as they typically cross local authority boundaries we cannot provide a figure for Leicestershire. Ten projects in Bosworth were successful in the Condition Improvement Fund this year. All schools are also allocated Devolved Formula Capital to spend on projects which meet their own priorities.

On top of capital allocations to the school system, the Priority School Building Programme is rebuilding or refurbishing school buildings in the worst condition in England, covering over 500 schools. In June, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced a new, transformative 10-year school rebuilding programme, which will replace poor condition and ageing buildings with modern, energy efficient facilities. Further details will be set out following the Spending Review.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Ian Lavery:

[101021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much additional funding schools in Wansbeck constituency have received for additional personal protective equipment and extra cleaning costs since the start of the covid-19 outbreak, by school.

Nick Gibb:

The first window for schools to claim funding back for exceptional costs due to the Covid-19 closed on 21 July 2020. Claims made by schools at that time in the Wansbeck parliamentary constituency for cleaning costs where there had been a case or suspected case of Covid-19 between March and July, are detailed in the attached table.

Claims for personal protective equipment were among those cost categories outside of the published scope of the scheme. An assessment is currently being undertaken to determine which of these other costs can be included, and we expect to write to schools and academies in November to confirm the outcome of that assessment.

Attachments:

1. 101021_PDF [101021_Wansbeck_schools_funding_claims_table.pdf]

Mr Clive Betts:**[102672]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the legal position is on the wearing of face masks and social distancing on school transport.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has provided guidance on minimising the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on dedicated school transport in the autumn term. It is available here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020#part-b-guidance-for-dedicated-transport-to-schools-and-other-places-of-education-for-autumn-term-2020.

The guidance explains that the social distancing guidelines for public transport, 2 metres or 1 metre plus other suitable precautions wherever possible, need not be uniformly applied on dedicated school transport, but that distancing should be maximised wherever possible. This approach is necessary to ensure all children can get to school or college. It is proportionate because dedicated transport often carries the same group of children or young people on a regular basis and they do not mix with the general public on those journeys. This helps limit the number of people with whom they come into contact.

The law that requires people aged 11 and over to wear a face covering on public transport does not apply to dedicated school transport. However, our guidance recommends that local authorities advise people aged 11 and over to wear a face covering unless they are exempt. We believe most local authorities expect children and young people to wear a face covering on dedicated school transport, and we support them in that.

■ Schools: Music**Paula Barker:****[100560]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that music education provision in schools is not reduced during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paula Barker:**[100561]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department can provide to schools to ensure that their risk assessments during the covid-19 outbreak do not lead to reduced access to music rooms and equipment.

Nick Gibb:

This Government is committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a high-quality music education. The guidance for the full opening of schools for academic year 2020-21 makes clear that the curriculum should remain broad so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including the arts. In Key Stage 4 and 5, the majority of GCSE and A level students are expected to continue to study their

examination subjects, including those who are due to take exams in music, to support them towards their preferred route to further study.

As there may be an additional risk of infection in environments where singing and the playing of wind or brass instruments takes place, the guidance sets out detailed advice on how schools can teach music safely.

In relation to risk assessments for rooms and equipment, the guidance includes advice on ventilation, room size and social distancing if teaching indoors, and how to use instruments and other equipment safely. This allows school leaders to make best use of their school estate and equipment so that all pupils can participate in music education.

In terms of wider support for music in schools, in January, the Department announced a further £80 million investment in Music Education Hubs for 2020-21 to ensure all children, whatever their background, have access to a high-quality music education. Music Education Hubs continue to provide a range of opportunities for young people, including whole class instrumental teaching, individual lessons, ensembles, choirs and more. Schools should work with their Hubs to ensure a quality music education for all pupils this year.

The Department also continues to support thousands of students to reach their full musical potential through the Music and Dance Scheme, with subsidised places at top music and dance schools across the country, and part time teaching at Centres for Advanced Training, all resuming this academic year.

■ Schools: Staff

Ian Lavery:

[101022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the mental wellbeing of school staff; and whether his Department has plans to support the mental health and well being of those staff.

Nick Gibb:

We recognise the pressure that teachers and leaders are under and are enormously grateful to school staff who have gone to great lengths to ensure children can get back into their classes safely this term.

The wellbeing and mental health of our staff in schools is of vital importance to the Department. Last year, the Department set up an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to advise on the wellbeing of staff in schools and colleges. Their recommendations were accepted by Ministers and published in June 2020. They include a commitment to develop a wellbeing charter for the teaching sector by the end of this year, which will include a range of commitments by the Government, schools and colleges to promote and protect staff wellbeing. The charter will help create an open culture around wellbeing and mental health and start to break down stigma. More information is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/890547/Nick_Gibb_letter_to_EAG.pdf.

We have taken decisive action to respond to the mental health needs of school leaders managing the pressures caused by COVID-19 by funding a pilot led by the Education Support Partnership to provide online peer support and telephone supervision from experts to around 250 school leaders. This service will run until December 2020, and the outcome of the pilot will inform future wellbeing and mental health interventions.

The Government has invested significantly in mental health charities and support for teachers to tackle the impact of COVID-19 on pupils, parents and staff. Through the new £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return training programme, we are supporting staff in schools and colleges to respond to the additional pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a direct result of COVID-19, as well as any negative emotional responses they or their teachers may still be experiencing. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/8m-programme-to-boost-pupil-and-teacher-wellbeing>.

■ Secondary Education: Vocational Guidance

Karin Smyth:

[100471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of careers advice in secondary education; and what assessment he has made of the effect of that advice on the social mobility of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Gillian Keegan:

Evidence shows that careers education is improving, as young people are benefitting from a new world-class approach to careers guidance. The department has invested in a careers infrastructure which is proven to accelerate schools and colleges' progress against the eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance. The average number of benchmarks achieved by schools and colleges in Careers Hubs was 3.9, compared to 2.0 for those not in a Careers Hub and outside of the Enterprise Adviser Network. There is more progress to be made and we will continue to support schools and colleges to improve their performance against the benchmarks.

Schools and colleges serving disadvantaged communities are among the highest performers. For example, schools and colleges in the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership achieved 4.2 benchmarks on average in academic year 2018-19.

Careers education is effective in driving social mobility. From a survey carried out in 2018-19, 73% of young people who have taken part in careers guidance activities said that they are more aware of different careers and 69% said they were clearer about what they need to do to achieve their ambitions.

■ Special Educational Needs: Wansbeck

Ian Lavery:

[101019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the ongoing needs of SEND pupils are being met in Wansbeck constituency.

Vicky Ford:

The COVID-19 outbreak has been extremely challenging for many families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The department's SEND and NHS England advisers continue to work with Northumberland County Council to support young people and families in Wansbeck and across the local area.

Supporting SEND pupils continues to be a priority for this government, and their wellbeing has been central to our response throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

That is why we:

- Asked schools to stay open to pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans where it was determined that their needs could be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment.
- Published comprehensive guidance throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, including for full opening of all schools in July, with separate guidance on specialist settings. This guidance was updated in September.
- Supported online educational resources, including specifically for children with SEND.
- Are providing £37.3 million for the Family Fund this year to help over 75,000 families raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses. This includes including £10 million specifically in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Have started a programme of visits by Ofsted and The Care Quality Commission working with local areas to understand the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families during the COVID-19 outbreak, and to support local areas to prioritise and meet their needs.

We have announced a major investment in education, including an additional £730 million into high needs next year, coming on top of the additional £780 million in the 2020-21 financial year, which means high needs budgets will have grown by over £1.5 billion, nearly a quarter, in just two years.

Northumberland's provisional high needs funding allocation for the 2021-22 financial year will be £40.5 million, an 11.1% per head increase on the amount of high needs funding allocated in the 2020-21 financial year. The provisional high needs funding allocations for every local authority can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs-2021-to-2022>.

The SEND Review remains a major priority for the government and we are considering improvements to make sure the SEND system is consistent, high quality,

and integrated across education, health and care, to establish a sustainable system for the future.

■ Supply Teachers

Ian Lavery: [101023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of schools that requested supply teacher cover since 1 September 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not hold the data requested centrally.

The Department collects information on teacher numbers from the School Workforce Census but does not hold live information on the use of supply teachers.

The Department has published guidance for schools for reopening which gives advice on how they can meet their workforce challenges, including advice on engaging supply teachers. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#school-workforce>.

Ian Lavery: [101024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government has provided additional funding to schools to meet the costs of additional supply teachers to cover teachers who are self-isolating during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Following last year's Spending Round, school budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20.

As stated in the school reopening guidance, schools should be using their existing resources to ensure that all children are back in school. There are no plans at present to reimburse additional costs incurred as part of that process, but we continue to keep this under review. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

The Government has provided additional financial support for those who are unable to work because they have COVID-19, or are self-isolating, which is outlined in the 'Coronavirus COVID-19: what to do if you're employed and cannot work' guidance.

This guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-what-to-do-if-youre-employed-and-cannot-work?priority-taxon=5ebf285a-9165-476c-be90-66b9729f50da#if-someone-you-live-with-has-symptoms-of-coronaviru>.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[102738]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support universities that are implementing their own covid-19 testing measures.

Michelle Donelan:

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on universities, and we welcome the resilience, innovation and dedication from the sector over these months, as well as its wider contribution to support the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak through offering research and resources. Capacity for COVID-19 testing is the highest it has ever been and we are seeing significant demand. The department continues to work closely with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), and with sector representatives, to ensure that any students who display COVID-19 symptoms can have quick and easy access to testing.

The government has set a target of 500,000-a-day for UK testing capacity by the end of October. Local testing sites will be most accessible to students and will have the quickest test result turnaround. DHSC plan to increase the total number of sites to 150 by the end of October, and to 400 by the end of January 2021. Many of these new testing sites will be located near universities. In addition, there are 258 mobile testing units. Where there is a mobile testing unit in the vicinity of the university, students and staff will also be able book a test at one of these units.

We have drawn on the expertise of the Higher Education Taskforce that we set up, and we have been providing robust public health advice and regular updates to the higher education sector to help providers work through challenges of setting up their own testing measures. Our universities are home to world-leading science and innovation, but for universities producing their own tests, they should work in conjunction with their local Health Protection Teams and directors of public health and NHS Test and Trace so we can utilise it for public safety.

Under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations (2010), it is a legal requirement to report positive cases of COVID-19 to Public Health England. It is a voluntary decision for providers to run testing programmes for their staff and students and we do not expect this to be a service offered by all higher education providers. Higher education providers should ensure they are fully aware of the implications, both clinical and organisational, of introducing testing programmes and of the potential limitations of any tests or test services that they use. In the event that higher education providers in the Bolton South East constituency want to conduct their own testing, departmental officials can be contacted about this at universities.ps@education.gov.uk.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[907594\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on preparations for meat exports to the EU after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

We are implementing processes to ensure that meat can continue to be exported to the EU from 1 January 2021, in line with EU import rules. We are hosting webinars to help traders familiarise themselves with those export processes, including for the Association Independent Meat Suppliers and International Meat Trade Association. We have also developed a Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme to support the export of products from complex but stable supply chains, including certain meat products and preparations.

Hannah Bardell: [\[907599\]](#)

What plans he has to publish the UK–Norway Fisheries Framework Agreement.

Victoria Prentis:

In line with UK protocol, the Agreement will be published when it is laid before Parliament. This is planned for Monday 19 October.

■ **Agriculture: Trade Promotion**

Simon Baynes: [\[907595\]](#)

What steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to promote UK agricultural produce abroad.

Victoria Prentis:

We work in tandem with the Department for International Trade to open new markets and secure export opportunities for our farmers and food producers. Our Food is GREAT campaign builds demand, drives awareness and increases positive perceptions of UK food and drink products in key overseas markets. Furthermore, the ‘bounce-back’ package of trade support and promotion measures announced in June will continue to help our food and drink businesses grow their exports.

■ **Air Pollution**

Ruth Jones: [\[101062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what schemes the £3.8 billion allocated to mitigating air pollution is being spent; when each element of that funding is planned to be spent; and what funding has been disbursed to date.

Rebecca Pow:

We have put in place a £3.8 billion plan to improve air quality and deliver cleaner transport. This includes:

- Nearly £1.5 billion between April 2015 and March 2021 to support the uptake of ultra-low emissions vehicles. Spending to date includes:
 - o Over £900 million in vehicle grant support to bring ULEV cars and vans onto UK roads, supporting over 240,000 claims
 - o Over £400 million in grants delivered through Innovate UK into ultra-low and zero emission technologies
 - o £130 million invested to support the purchase of over 1,700 low emission buses and supporting infrastructure through the Green Bus Fund* and the Low Emission Bus Scheme
 - o £40 million in Go Ultra Low Cities with ambitious plans to become global exemplars of ultra low emission vehicle uptake
 - o Over £20 million across 27 local authorities, to install chargepoint infrastructure dedicated to electric taxis and PHVs
- £1.2 billion for the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy to increase cycling and walking and make our roads safer for vulnerable users. Details are in the Report to Parliament (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis-report-to-parliament>).
- £880 million to help local authorities develop and implement local air quality plans and to support those impacted by these plans. Of this, £394 million has been allocated to local authorities, the remainder will be used to support ongoing development and delivery of local plans.
- £80 million to support bus retrofit, this funding has been allocated to local authorities
- £14 million on the air quality grant, this funding has been allocated to local authorities.
- £75 million to improve air quality on the Strategic Road Network in the Road Investment Strategy. £39 million of this has so far been spent, with a further £21 million planned to be spent before April 2021.

In addition to the £3.8 billion referred to, Government has committed a further £2.5 billion to support a number of cities improve their local transport systems through the Transforming Cities Fund; a number of these projects will help deliver air quality improvements. A further £5 billion has also been announced by the Prime Minister to deliver cleaner buses and improved services and to boost cycling and walking. This funding will help improve air quality.

To accelerate the transition to zero emission vehicles a further £1 billion was announced at March Budget to extend plug in vehicle grants to 2023 and support the roll out of Electric Vehicles infrastructure over the next five years.

■ Animal Experiments: Chemicals

Alex Sobel:

[100537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government will make it its policy to end the duplication of chemical testing on animals.

Rebecca Pow:

When the UK moves from the EU REACH system to UK REACH at the end of the Transition Period, the grandfathering of all existing UK-held REACH registrations into the UK system will avoid the need to duplicate animal testing associated with re-registration. The UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used. This is known as the "last-resort principle", which we will retain and enshrine in legislation through our landmark Environment Bill

We are determined that there should be no need for any additional animal testing for a chemical that has already been registered, unless it is subject to further evaluation that shows the registration dossier is inadequate or there are still concerns about the hazards and risks of the chemical, especially to human health.

■ Bees and Honey

Damian Hinds:

[100348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the levels of (a) honey production, (b) the total bee population and (c) the wild bee population in the last 10 years.

Rebecca Pow:

UK honey production has recovered over the past few years to around 6,500 tonnes in 2019, following a significant drop earlier in the decade. A range of factors affect production, predominantly weather, levels of pests and disease and numbers of large-scale commercial bee farmers. No formal assessment is made of honey production trends but the National Bee Unit has a key role in supporting the sector by ensuring that levels of pests and disease are kept to a minimum. This is achieved through delivery of our apiary inspection programme and the provision of education and training for beekeepers.

Honey bee numbers are dependent upon the numbers of colonies managed by beekeepers and bee farmers. In the last ten years, numbers of colonies recorded on the National Bee Unit's BeeBase website have doubled from around 110,000 to around 220,000. It should be recognised, however, that this increase is due in part to new registrations of existing beekeepers, and not entirely to additional colonies or beekeepers.

Each year, the Government publishes an indicator of trends in populations of wild bees and other pollinators in the UK, measuring changes in the distribution of almost 400 pollinating insect species since 1980, including 137 species of bees. The indicator shows an overall decline since 1980. However, there are encouraging, but not yet definitive signs of improvement for some species. For example, from 2013

onwards, there is evidence of an overall increase in the distribution of the 137 wild bee species, although other insect pollinators have continued to decline. The annual update of the indicator was published on 15 October 2020.

Defra works with a range of partners to implement a National Pollinator Strategy to address declines in wild pollinators and concerns about bee health, alongside more specific action to support honey bees and beekeeping in the Healthy Bees Plan. This has included establishing a UK-wide pollinator monitoring and research partnership in collaboration with research institutes and volunteer organisations to gather further data on the status of UK pollinators.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Pay

Philip Davies:

[\[100324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the biggest pay rise given to someone in his Department was in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms in the last 12 months.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra follows the pay remit guidance set by HM Treasury for staff at delegated grades and Cabinet Office for Senior Civil Servants. For the most recent pay reviews, this meant that Defra implemented average pay awards within the 2.5% limit for delegated grades and 2% for Senior Civil Servants, as set out in the guidance.

The biggest pay rise given to someone in Core Defra in the last 12 months in percentage terms was 68.5%.

The biggest pay rise given to someone in Core Defra in the last 12 months in cash terms was £22,000.

These pay rises are the result of promotions to new roles with greater responsibilities and accountability.

■ Dogs: Electronic Training Aids

Martyn Day:

[\[102875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much money his Department has spent on researching the effect of electric shock collars on dog welfare in each year for which information is available.

Victoria Prentis:

Between 2007 and 2010 Defra spent £469,000 researching the effects of electric shock collars on dogs, conducting studies to assess the effect of pet training aids, specifically remote static pulse systems, on the welfare of domestic dogs. Between 2010 and 2011 the department spent a further £69,925 on the research, totalling £538,925. No other research on e-collars has been funded before or since the aforementioned years.

Martyn Day:

[102876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of dogs that have been trained with an electric shock collar in the last three years.

Victoria Prentis:

The department does not keep this information.

■ **Electronic Training Aids**

Martyn Day:

[102877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many animal welfare organisations have made representations to his Department supporting a ban on electric shock collars in each year for which information is available.

Victoria Prentis:

The department does not keep this information. However I can state that in 2017 over 140 animal welfare organisations responded to our public consultation on the proposed ban for electronic training collars for cats and dogs in England.

■ **Fireworks: Air Pollution**

Alex Davies-Jones:

[102959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of fireworks on air pollution levels; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

An assessment of the effect of celebrations surrounding Bonfire Night (5th of November) on air quality is made annually as part of the Air Pollution in the UK report. The assessment is based on measurements from the national monitoring network which monitors concentrations of air pollutants in near real-time on the UK-AIR website. The latest report (for 2019) can be accessed at the following URL: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/annualreport/index>. In the latest report, the effects of Bonfire Night celebrations are dealt with under section 6.1.3 Localised Particulate Pollution Episodes (pages 106 – 108).

■ **Flood Control**

Mark Menzies:

[100953]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to prevent future inland flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's recently published [FCERM Policy Statement](#) and the Environment Agency's [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy](#) set out the long term plans for managing inland flooding in England. In addition, at the March 2020 budget the Government announced a further £5.2 billion funding in flood defences in England

over six years from April 2021. This will help deliver 2,000 schemes to better protect 336,000 properties and 550km of transport infrastructure from inland and coastal flooding by March 2027.

Mark Menzies:

[\[100954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to enable farm owners and landowners to take more effective action in preventing inland flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

Many farmers and landowners are already taking actions to help manage flood risks – both risks to their own land and risks to surrounding areas. Government provides financial incentives for some of these activities within Countryside Stewardship and, through the Catchment Sensitive Farming advice programme, we have piloted including flood risk management within integrated advice to farmers.

The Government policy statement on flood and coastal erosion risk management, published in July 2020, explains our plans to do more to harness the opportunities rural landscapes bring to increase resilience for people living and working in rural areas and further downstream.

We will ensure our countryside is resilient to flooding so that our sustainable food industry can flourish, and our farming and agricultural sectors can thrive. To achieve this, risk management authorities will work with landowners to maximise good land and soil management and to implement natural flood management solutions.

We will join up actions for water, floods, the environment and farming to ensure actions that promote good soil and land management, water storage for farm use, and the restoration of peat, moors and other land are naturally designed to support flood risk management.

A key element of this will be the Environmental Land Management scheme, founded on the principle of public money for public goods. Farmers and other land managers may enter into agreements to be paid for delivering a range of public goods as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, including: a reduction in and protection from environmental hazards such as flooding.

■ Flood Control: Lancashire

Mark Menzies:

[\[100952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of inland flood defence spending in Lancashire in each of the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

The table below shows the total amount of capital spend for inland and coastal flood defence projects in Lancashire since 2015.

FINANCIAL YEAR	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Lancashire County Total spend (£m)	33.3	37.13	19.23	22.73	14.12	16.75
Lancashire County Government spend (£m)	30.54	35.96	18.83	21.71	11.31	9.05
Lancashire County homes better protected	8,752	7,781	6,113	5,728	2,562	2,287

'County Total Spend' includes public and private contributions. 'County Government Spend' is Government Grant-in-Aid.

■ Flood Control: North West

Mark Menzies:

[\[100951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to prevent inland flooding in the North West.

Rebecca Pow:

Across the North West (NW), investment from the Environment Agency (EA) and local councils from April 2015 to March 2021 will better protect approximately 42,000 properties against inland and coastal flooding by April 2021. Around 5,000 of these will be better protected this financial year. Included in this programme was the £21 million investment at Lytham (Lancashire) that benefits 2,300 homes.

The EA carries out maintenance of critical flood defences and rivers that pose the greatest risk to communities. 600 miles of open channels are managed across the NW. For example, in Cumbria and Lancashire, 13 miles of culverts are regularly inspected to ensure water can flow freely.

The EA is investing approximately £4 million in natural flood management across the NW. This is in addition to further investment in natural flood management by the NW Regional Flood Coastal Committee's local levy.

Planning, responding and recovering from flooding is a key aspect of the EA's work in the NW. The EA works closely with all five local resilience forums to deliver a coordinated local response to flooding - ensuring they have a large number of trained

and capable staff, temporary defences, pumps and other key equipment. They also help many local community groups develop emergency plans.

The EA warns and informs the public about flood risk. Across the NW, 147,669 properties at risk receive flood warnings. By March 2022 all properties at high risk of flooding from main rivers or the sea will be able to receive a flood warning.

The EA also works closely with local planning authorities to help ensure local plans appropriately account for current and future flood risk. The EA comments on strategically significant individual planning applications to ensure flood risk is appropriately accounted for in decision making. They also regulate work in or near main rivers to ensure that it doesn't increase flood risk or cause environmental damage.

■ Flood Control: River Severn

Daniel Kawczynski:

[100332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to allocate additional funding to the River Severn Partnership to support the implementation of short term flood defences to tackle the risk of flooding in winter 2020-21.

Rebecca Pow:

In July, the Government announced that up to an additional £170 million will be spent to accelerate work on shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction in 2020 or 2021. The Government awarded the River Severn Partnership a significant additional investment from this fund which is providing up to £30 million for the Severn Valley, and up to £4.9 million for Tenbury Wells.

In addition, in March the Government announced its national £120 million package to repair flood risk management assets damaged as a result of the winter floods. £4.2 million will be for assets on the Severn corridor, which will cover 18 projects. Repair work to these assets is currently ongoing though, in the meantime, the defences will remain fully operational, including both demountable and temporary defences at a number of locations such as Shrewsbury and Ironbridge.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[100333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help facilitate research on the cause of the flooding on the River Severn in March 2020, in order to prevent destruction as a result of flooding in the future.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency's (EA) River Severn river modelling and flood mapping is currently being updated to incorporate the latest available data, including information gathered as a result of last winter's flooding events. The £250,000 Grant-in-Aid investment will deliver a completed model by the end of 2021.

As well as updating flood risk mapping, this new flood model will deliver evidence to support the flood warning service, potential future flood schemes, and will inform the

Environment Agency's advice in response to proposals to develop within the catchment. It is already being used to support delivery of the ambitions of the River Severn Partnership, including the Shrewsbury Water Management Scheme which has the potential to deliver significant flood risk, environmental, water resource and growth benefits. The scheme is in the early stages of development and has already benefitted from government funding of £30 million.

In addition, in July the Government chose the River Severn Partnership alongside three other places to test and develop climate adaptive pathway plans, providing £1.5 million of funding from the Innovative Resilience Programme. This will enable the Environment Agency to work with local partners through the River Severn Partnership to assess a range of climate change scenarios, and identify the right current and future decisions required to manage the risk of flooding and coastal change.

■ Food Supply

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[102904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is he taking to ensure the resilience of the supply of food to (a) schools, (b) hospitals and (c) care homes.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Harrow East on 7 October 2020, PQ UIN 98702.

[questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-02/98702]

■ Horses: Animal Welfare

Robert Halfon:

[907600]

What steps his Department is taking to reduce the practice of horse tethering.

Victoria Prentis:

People who tether their horses inappropriately risk causing their animals distress and suffering and could be liable to prosecution for offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids provides keepers with information on how and when tethering may be used. We remain committed to tackling the issue of inappropriate horse tethering through effective partnership working, enforcement and dissemination of best practice.

■ Oilseed Rape

Damian Hinds:

[100347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of trends in (a) acreage of oilseed rape, (b) imports of oilseed rape and (c) imports of oilseed rape substitutes in the last 10 years.

Victoria Prentis:

The Oilseed rape area increased from 269 thousand hectares in 1984, reaching a peak of 756 thousand hectares in 2012. Since then the area has decreased each year (apart from 2018 when an increase to 583 thousand hectares was seen). The provisional figure for 2020 shows a further decrease to 388 thousand hectares.

Total area planted for Oilseed rape in hectares for the last ten years

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Thousand hectares	705	756	715	675	652	579	562	583	530	388*

*2020 figure is current estimate based on Defra survey

Total Oilseed rape imports over the same period are shown below

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Thousand tonnes	64	18	177	87	87	63	345	206	354	

Total other Oilseed (excl Rape but including Soya, Nut, Sunflower, Linseed) imports over the same period are shown below

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Thousand tonnes	1,016	991	842	1,013	998	903	954	1,012	851	

■ Rivers: Flood Control

Sir Greg Knight:[\[102691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of rivers (a) are fit for and (b) require (i) upgrading work for and (ii) extensive maintenance for flood risk management purposes; what the names are of those (A) rivers and (B) stretches of river; what plans he has to undertake that work; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) prioritises maintenance, improvement or construction work on main rivers that pose the greatest flood risk for people, homes and

businesses. The EA maintains 36,000 km of main rivers in England for flood risk management purposes.

The EA uses its own assessments and modelling to identify required maintenance and publishes this in a programme each year. The published 5 year maintenance programme shows what work is intended to maintain, repair or refurbish assets, which includes work on main rivers. This is available through a postcode search on gov.uk at <https://environment.data.gov.uk/asset-management/index.html>. The maintenance requirement varies each year often as a result of weather conditions.

Maintenance activities on main rivers to manage flood risk appropriately includes clearing overgrown vegetation, dredging, controlling populations of rabbits on embankments, maintaining pumps, repointing brick walls and repairs to culverts. The EA's annual river maintenance programme is timetabled using information from inspections, maintenance standards, levels of flood risk and from legal and statutory obligations.

Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, the EA invested over £180 million on maintenance for flood and coastal risk management to ensure communities continue to be protected.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Africa: Females

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[102735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help advance gender equality for adolescent girls and tackle harmful social norms in Africa.

James Duddridge:

Investing in adolescent girls' equality, empowerment and 12 years of quality education is critical to breaking the intergenerational cycles of poverty, and this includes tackling the social norms that prevent them from realising their full potential.

The UK has provided a significant amount of support to adolescent girls in Africa. For example, our Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) programme works across 24 countries in Africa to tackle the social norms that prevent girls and women from realising their sexual and reproductive health rights. Our flagship programme on child marriage has included targeted support in Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Niger, Burkina Faso and Ghana. Since 2015 the programme has supported almost 8 million girls globally with schooling initiatives, skills training and girls' clubs to prevent and respond to child marriage. We will work to accelerate progress on a wider range of issues that hold girls back from accessing a quality education and achieving their potential.

The UK is co-leading the new global Generation Equality Action Coalition on gender-based violence to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on

Gender Equality. As part of this, FCDO is using evidence to help drive more concerted, coordinated global action across the international system to prevent and address violence against the most marginalised women and girls, with particular focus on adolescent girls.

■ Africa: Genito-urinary Medicine

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[102733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services in Africa.

Wendy Morton:

Evidence shows that women and girls' sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR) are under pressure as a result of COVID-19. Funded by the UK, the Guttmacher Institute estimated that a 10% decline in reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health services over the course of a year in low and low-middle income countries resulting from service disruption could lead to 49 million women with an unmet need for contraceptives and 15 million unintended pregnancies.

Women in Sub-Saharan Africa face interrupted access to SRH services. The supply of family planning commodities has faced major disruptions. We are in frequent touch with our NGO and UN partners to monitor the constraints and barriers women and girls face.

The UK will continue to show leadership internationally on this issue, and work with our partners through the crisis so they can continue to provide SRHR services. 'WISH', our flagship women's sexual & reproductive health programme, operates across 24 African countries. It has developed innovative ways to deliver services and supplies during COVID-19, while also supporting efforts to stop the spread of the disease .

■ Africa: Maternal Mortality

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[102734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help end preventable maternal deaths in Africa.

James Duddridge:

Investing in adolescent girls' equality, empowerment and 12 years of quality education is critical to breaking the intergenerational cycles of poverty, and this includes tackling the social norms that prevent them from realising their full potential.

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supported almost 8 million girls globally with schooling initiatives, skills training and girls' clubs to prevent and respond to child marriage. We will work to accelerate progress on a wider range of issues that hold girls back from accessing a quality education and achieving their potential.

The UK is co-leading the new global Generation Equality Action Coalition on gender-based violence to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on Gender Equality. As part of this, FCDO is using evidence to help drive more concerted, coordinated global action across the international system to prevent and address violence against the most marginalised women and girls, with particular focus on adolescent girls.

■ China: Uighurs

Jim Shannon:

[\[101011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Chinese authorities on the release of people held in (a) de-extremification, (b) transformation-through-education and (c) other facilities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

Nigel Adams:

We regularly raise our serious concerns about the extra-judicial detention of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, both directly with the Chinese authorities and at the UN alongside international partners. On 6 October, the UK and 38 other countries joined a statement at the UN Third Committee in New York expressing deep concern at the situation in Xinjiang, and called on China to refrain from the practice of arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in political re-education camps. This growing caucus reflects UK diplomatic leadership, including the personal involvement of the Foreign Secretary in raising the issue with a wide range of partners. On 28 July, the Foreign Secretary raised human rights violations in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi.

■ Education: Children

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[101064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Save the Children report entitled Save Our Education: Protect every child's right to learn in the COVID-19 response and recovery, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the 9.7 million children at risk of not returning to education as a result of the covid-19 pandemic return to school.

Wendy Morton:

The education of over 1.3 billion children in over 150 countries has been disrupted since COVID-19 struck.

The UK is committed to ensuring children around the world return to school when it is safe to do so. We have adapted our bilateral education programmes in 18 countries in response to the pandemic and have stepped up funding for education including a

£5 million uplift to the Education Cannot Wait fund for emergency education in fragile contexts, and £5.3 million of new funding to UNHCR to enable over 5500 teachers to provide vital education for children in 10 refugee-hosting countries over the crucial next seven months. As the largest donor to the Global Partnership for Education we have helped set up a dedicated \$500 million COVID-19 accelerated funding window to maintain basic education. We are working closely with UNICEF's Reopening Better Campaign, both globally and in country.

The UK, along with Kenya, will host next year's replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education, the major global fund for education. This will be a key moment, with UK leadership, to mobilise much needed commitments on this agenda.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[101065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that its education programmes focus on supporting the poorest and most marginalised children.

Wendy Morton:

Our education programmes prioritise the poorest and most marginalised children, especially girls. The UK is a world leader in supporting girls' education and champions the right of all girls to 12 years of quality education by 2030. Between 2015 and 2020 the UK supported at least 15.6 million children around the world to gain a decent education, of which 8.1 million were girls.

The UK is dedicated to supporting education in emergencies and protracted crises: reaching these children is critical to global progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. The UK is the largest donor to Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in emergencies, and Chairs its Executive Committee. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognise that children already living through emergencies are at a double disadvantage. The UK has provided an additional £5 million to ECW as well as £5.3 million to UNHCR to support refugee education.

There are an estimated 65 million children with disabilities, and 1/3 of all out of school children at the primary level have a disability. In 2019, together with the World Bank and the Norwegian Government, we launched the Inclusive Education Initiative (IEI). This initiative is providing technical expertise to help make education more inclusive for children across the spectrum of disabilities.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[101066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure a co-ordinated and adequately funded global action plan for getting children back to school following the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to ensuring a safe return to school for children around the world. We are taking decisive action through our 18 bilateral education programmes, and we are supporting global efforts, including the UNICEF-led campaign 'Opening Up Better', to ensure children return to school when it is safe to do so. We recognise

that children already living through emergencies are at a double disadvantage during the COVID-19 pandemic and have provided an additional £5 million to Education Cannot Wait and £5.3 million to UNHCR to support refugee education.

The UK has played a leading role coordinating the global response, and on 20 and 22 October the UK will be co-hosting an extraordinary Global Education Meeting (GEM) with UNESCO. This extraordinary meeting of the GEM will bring together the international education community to agree on a set of global priority actions to be put in place to support the recovery from COVID-19 and strengthening education systems.

The UK, along with Kenya, will host next year's replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education, the major global fund for education. This will be a key moment to mobilise much needed commitments as we build back from COVID-19.

■ **EU External Relations: Falkland Islands**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[100306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to develop the Falkland Islands' future relationship with the EU.

Wendy Morton:

We are in regular contact with the political leaders of the Falkland Islands to discuss the Islands' international interests and to identify how best the UK Government can represent these with the EU and elsewhere.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Non-governmental Organisations**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[100514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 October 2020 to Question 95714, how many of the non-Government Organisations are defined by his Department as (a) big, (b) medium and (c) small.

Wendy Morton:

According to the way the FCDO defines the size of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) applying for funding through UK Aid Direct, which is based on annual income, 17 of the NGOs are large, 8 NGOs are medium, and 3 NGOs are categorised as small.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Pay**

Philip Davies:

[\[100326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the biggest pay rise given to someone in his Department was in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms in the last 12 months.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO cannot provide the data requested as it has the potential to identify an individual's personal information.

Information on the salaries of our Senior Board members are already published on an annual basis in our annual reports. Information on salaries and roles for all staff, highlighting those at Director and above is published as Organogram of Staff Roles & Salaries on Gov.UK; this information is updated every six months. Our annual pay awards are aligned to the Cabinet Office pay remits for delegated grades and SCS.

■ Gulf States: Overseas Aid**Brendan O'Hara:**[\[102830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 3 July 2018 to Question 157711 on Gulf States: Overseas Aid, if he will set out (a) the activities and (b) the cost of each those activities delivered through the Integrated Activity Fund exclusively within (a) Saudi Arabia, (b) Bahrain, (c) Kuwait, (d) Oman, (e) Qatar and (f) United Arab Emirates in financial year 2019-20.

James Cleverly:

The Integrated Activity Fund supported a range of non-ODA programmes and projects across the Gulf. These included, but were not limited to, activities focusing on culture, healthcare, youth engagement, economic diversification and institutional capacity building. Activities were funded in all six Gulf Cooperation Council states: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Many of the projects and programme activities were delivered regionally, so it is not possible to provide a breakdown by beneficiary state.

■ Hong Kong: National Security**Layla Moran:**[\[100533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's speech transcript, UN Human Rights Council 45: UK statement on China for item 4 general debate published on 25 September 2020, what assessment his Department has made of the number of people detained without trial under Hong Kong's new National Security Law imposed by Chinese authorities and (b) what steps his Department is taking to address such a breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

Nigel Adams:

Beijing's imposition on Hong Kong of the National Security Law (NSL) is a serious breach of the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration. It violates the high degree of autonomy of executive and legislative powers and independent judicial authority, provided for in the Joint Declaration. We understand that as of 12 October 2020, one person has been charged under the NSL and denied bail. According to the Hong Kong Police Force's latest figures, a further 27 people have been arrested under the NSL and released on bail.

The Foreign Secretary set out his concerns about the situation in Hong Kong to Chinese State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi on 8 June and 28 July. FCDO officials have also raised concerns about the arrests directly with the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities, making clear that due process must be followed in all cases. On 25 September, the UK raised concerns about the NSL in our national statement at the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council on China, during the Item 4 general debate. On 6 October, we and 38 other countries expressed our deep concern on Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet at the UN Third Committee.

The rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong must be upheld. We will continue to bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong and to hold China to their international obligations.

■ Hostage Taking

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[101043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his (a) US, (b) Canadian and (c) Australian counterparts on managing the risks in regard to state hostage taking.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to have conversations with a broad range of likeminded countries on the issue of arbitrary detention in a range of fora, and reaffirm the international legal obligations prohibiting such practices, as demonstrated by our recent co-signing of a joint statement on the politically-motivated detention of foreign nationals at the Human Rights Council in October. The UK Government will always take into account any relevant international law obligations and UK policy to assist arbitrarily detained British nationals overseas.

■ Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy

Jamie Stone:

[\[102898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made on the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

James Cleverly:

The Government is engaging widely on the Integrated Review, including with Parliament, the Devolved Administrations, international allies, think tanks and academics, and representatives of civil society. The Government has also completed a public Call for Evidence to help inform the Integrated Review and received a diverse range of over 450 submissions. The Integrated Review remains closely aligned with the Spending Review, to ensure that ambition, capabilities and budgets can be closely coordinated.

■ Israel: Embassies

Stephen Crabb:

[\[100918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what delivery partners were chosen by the British Embassy in Tel Aviv for funding of covid-19 related activities.

James Cleverly:

The British Embassy ran an open competition in which three organisations were successful in their application for funding. One of the projects includes funding for Physicians for Human Rights Israel who are helping migrant and asylum seekers in Israel in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Tel Aviv University also received funding to analyse which forms of preventative behaviour can allow economic recovery from COVID-19. We are still in negotiations with the third organisation.

■ Lebanon: Politics and Government

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[100919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support the formation of a new government in Lebanon.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[100920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Lebanese politicians following the resignation of acting Prime Minister Mustapha Adib.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[100921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support constitutional reform in Lebanon.

James Cleverly:

The collapse of government negotiations following the resignation of Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib is disappointing, as well as damaging for the long-suffering people of Lebanon. Lebanon's leaders must act in the national interest and urgently form a new government and implement reforms. The UK is a long-standing friend of Lebanon and the Lebanese people, and will be on hand now, as ever, to support them in their time of urgent need. I discussed these issues with the Lebanese Ambassador on 12 October.

■ Malaria: Overseas Aid

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[100967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) ensure that the Government meets its commitment to invest £500 million fighting malaria for 2019-20 and (b) renew the Government's commitment to invest £500 million fighting malaria per annum.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to tackling malaria and this is linked to our manifesto commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children. As the Spending Review process has not yet concluded, we are unable to comment in detail on specific future spending options. It remains in the UK's interest to use ODA to make the world healthier, safer and more prosperous and to continue to invest in strong health systems and reducing the global burden of malaria.

■ **Members: Correspondence****Alyn Smith:**[\[100541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letters from the hon. Member for Stirling of 1 July 2020 on Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

I responded to both letters in July 2020. We have resent your responses.

■ **Middle East: Peace Negotiations****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[100962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the refusal by the Arab League to condemn the peace agreement signed between Israel, Bahrain and the UAE as requested by the Palestinian Authority.

James Cleverly:

We warmly welcome the normalising of relations, and the strengthening of ties, between Israel and its neighbours. We urge others across the region to follow the example of the UAE and Bahrain. The changing regional context and converging Arab and Israeli interests present an opening to develop relations and create the conditions for serious Israeli-Palestinian talks to resume. We profoundly hope that this moment can be used as a step towards direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians, as there can be no substitute in order to reach a two-state solution and a lasting peace. We urge the Palestinian Authority to resume co-operation with Israel, which is in the interests of the Palestinian people. We also call on both parties to make constructive and open steps towards a return to dialogue.

■ **Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict****Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[102753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to help end the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan by urging Armenia to withdraw its military forces from the illegally occupied territories of Azerbaijan as stated in UN Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993.

Wendy Morton:

We acknowledge the importance of these UN Security Council Resolutions, which reaffirm the primacy of the OSCE Minsk Group as the international forum via which a peaceful settlement to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be reached. We consider that the Basic Principles for a settlement proposed by the Minsk Group co-chairs provide the basis for a reasonable compromise in this regard, taking due account of the relevant OSCE principles governing relations between member-states.

I raised UK concerns regarding on-going military action in Nagorno-Karabakh with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 28 September and urged both parties to return to the negotiating table under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group.

■ Navid Afkari**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[100960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Iranian authorities condemning the execution of the wrestling champion Navid Afkari by the Iranian regime.

James Cleverly:

The execution of Navik Afkari by the Iranian authorities was deplorable. The UK Government made clear its public condemnation of the action on 12 September. The UK Government is firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country, as a matter of principle, and we unreservedly support the right to peaceful protest. Iran's human rights record is of serious and longstanding concern to the UK. The continued use of the death penalty, weak rule of law and restrictions on freedoms of expression remain deeply worrying. We share the concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran that death sentences were handed down and/or implemented following proceedings that did not comply with fair trial and due process safeguards. The UK is committed to holding Iran to account on a wide range of human rights issues, including the right to a fair trial. We will continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues.

■ Nigeria: Police**Layla Moran:**[\[102917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations the Government has made to the Nigerian Government on the Special Anti-Robbery Squad.

James Duddridge:

In response to recent incidents involving the Federal Special Anti-robbery Squad (FSARS), our High Commissioner responded publicly to urge police reform and has highlighted our concerns to the Nigerian authorities. We are monitoring the protests in response to these incidents closely. We urge the Nigerian security services to respect

Nigerians' right to protest peacefully. The Nigerian police must uphold human rights and the rule of law in all operations, investigate any incidents of police brutality and hold those responsible to account. We welcome the Nigerian Government's swift response to the public outcry, including President Buhari's decision to disband FSARS.

The UK Government is working with the Nigerian Government and international and civil society partners to support broader police reform in Nigeria, building on the Police Establishment Act 2020 which came into force in September. We are developing proposals to support new police regulations to accompany the Act, to create a more accountable and responsive policing model in Nigeria.

■ Nigeria: Violence

Layla Moran:

[\[102918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help bring about a cessation to violence in Nigeria.

James Duddridge:

We are concerned by increasing insecurity in Nigeria. Intercommunal violence across multiple states continues to have a devastating impact on local communities. We engage closely with the federal government, state governments, international partners and the National Economic Council to push for solutions that address the root causes of intercommunal violence. For example, the UK provided technical support to help develop a National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP). The NLTP sets out a long-term approach to transition towards more sedentary forms of cattle-rearing to address competition over land: one of the root causes of intercommunal violence. The plan is being implemented in eight Middle Belt states. A number of other states have expressed interest and we are encouraging their adoption of the plan. We will continue to encourage the Nigerian Government to take urgent action to protect those at risk of intercommunal violence, bring perpetrators to justice and implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of the violence.

For over a decade, violence in North East Nigeria, conducted by terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa, has also had a devastating impact on local communities. We are committed to helping Nigeria respond to the terrorist threat in the North East. We provide a comprehensive package of security, humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to Nigeria to help tackle the threat and support affected communities.

■ Overseas Aid

Jim Shannon:

[\[102076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he will take to ensure (a) parliamentary and (b) independent scrutiny of the Official Development Assistance budget.

James Cleverly:

This Government is committed to transparency and robust scrutiny of Official Development Assistance expenditure. On 29 August, the Foreign Secretary announced that the Independent Commission for Aid Impact will continue its vital role scrutinising UK aid. The structure and remit of select committees is a matter for Parliament.

Brendan O'Hara:[\[102832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many activities delivered through the Integrated Activity Fund (a) were and (b) were not subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment in the 2018-19 financial year.

James Cleverly:

During the 2018-19 financial year the Integrated Activity Fund delivered 44 projects, 13 of which were covered by Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment.

■ Overseas Aid: Disclosure of Information**Brendan O'Hara:**[\[102831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the Government has not disclosed its evaluations and Overseas Justice and Security assessments of activities delivered through the Integrated Activity Fund; and what assessment he has made of the implications of that decision for Government policy on transparency of public spending.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO's general policy is to not publish OSJA assessments or the information contained in these assessments. This ensures that officials are able to be fully candid in their assessments and accurately assess the risks associated with the proposed assistance.

■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Children**John McDonnell:**[\[100282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of schools and related school feeding programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa on (a) girls and (b) all children in that region.

Wendy Morton:

The education of over 1.3 billion children in over 150 countries has been disrupted since COVID-19 struck, including many across Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that 10 million children may never return to school, and past evidence suggests the majority will be girls.

The effects of school closures go beyond the millions of hours of lost learning. School-based nutrition programmes provide a key safety net for many children and

families and help keep children - particularly girls - in school. School closures also increase the risk of child labour, neglect, violence and sexual abuse.

In response, the UK has taken decisive action. We have adapted our bilateral education programmes in 18 countries to provide child protection, learning continuity, safe reopening of schools. As the largest donor to the Global Partnership for Education we have helped establish a dedicated \$500 million COVID-19 accelerated funding window to maintain basic education. We have topped up our contribution to the global fund for Education in Emergencies to which we are also the largest donor, which includes support for school feeding programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa including in Burkina Faso, Niger, DRC, Mali, Uganda and Somalia.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Counselling

Fiona Bruce:

[97541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing independent counselling for women considering an abortion.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Guidance from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists sets out that healthcare staff caring for women requesting abortion should identify those who require more support in the decision-making process and pathways to additional support, including counselling and social services, should be available.

Abortions provided by independent sector abortion providers must meet the Required Standard Operating Procedures (RSOPs) set out in the Department's Procedures for the Approval of Independent Sector Places for the Termination of Pregnancy (Abortion). The Department's RSOPs set out that: women are not required to have compulsory counselling or compulsory time for reflection before the abortion; clinicians caring for women requesting abortion should be able to identify those who require more support than can be provided in the routine abortion service setting, for example young women, those with a pre-existing mental health condition, those who are subject to sexual violence or poor social support, or where there is evidence of coercion; and for the minority of women who require formal, therapeutic counselling, services should have referral pathways in place with access to trained counsellors with appropriate expertise.

■ Abortion: Down's Syndrome

Fiona Bruce:

[97542]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many abortions have been carried out where the foetus was diagnosed with Down's Syndrome, since January 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Between January and June 2020 there were 339 mentions of Down's Syndrome on HSA4 Abortion Notification Forms. This figure includes all legal abortions performed in England and Wales. This data should be treated as provisional, meaning that it may be subject to revision if the Department receives further information from hospitals and clinics on missing information from HSA4 forms, or more forms are received.

■ Anaesthetics: Greater London**Gareth Thomas:****[96756]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of anaesthetists working in London hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

As at June 2020, the number of doctors of all grades in the specialty of anaesthetics in the Government Office Region of London is 2,550 full time equivalent (FTE). Of these 1,299 FTE are consultants. This is an increase of 604 of which 356 are consultants since 2010.

We have increased the number of medical school places by 1,500 over the last three years and as part of this record expansion, also opened five new medical schools across the country. This year, we have also agreed to take in over 900 additional students following A-levels assessment – these students will start this year with some choosing to defer until 2021 intake. We have more medical students in training than at any other time in National Health Service history.

■ Arthritis: Health Services**Charlotte Nichols:****[95756]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure arthritis services resume as soon as possible following the disruption resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

A range of guidance has been made available to healthcare commissioners and clinicians to support the resumption of arthritis services following the COVID-19 outbreak, which have now been restarted.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence guidance 'COVID-19 rapid guideline: rheumatological autoimmune, inflammatory and metabolic bone disorders', updated on 2 July 2020, sets out best practice for clinicians and commissioners on managing disorders, including arthritis, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance is available at the following link:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG167

NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Federation of Specialty Surgical Associations have also provided a range of prioritisation advice for restarting community services, which set out how to meet the needs of people with conditions such as arthritis safely and effectively, including where surgery is required. This guidance can be found at the following links:

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/covid-19-prioritisation-within-community-health-services-with-annex_19-march-2020/

fssa.org.uk/userfiles/pages/files/covid19/prioritisation_master_240820.pdf

■ Bereavement Counselling: Parents

Vicky Foxcroft:

[100490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the value of providing clear referral pathways to high quality, effective and evidence-based specialist psychological support for those experiencing pregnancy and baby loss.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Every part of the country has perinatal mental health services in place and we remain committed to improving and expanding these services. By 2023/24, at least 66,000 women in total with moderate to severe perinatal mental health difficulties will have access to specialist perinatal mental health services. The new services will integrate maternity, reproductive health and psychological therapy for women experiencing moderate-severe or complex mental health difficulties directly arising from, or related to, the maternity experience, including perinatal loss.

The national bereavement care pathway brings together information, tools and resources to support the provision of high quality care for women and their families who experience pregnancy or baby loss, as well as linking to online learning for all healthcare professionals and staff who are involved in the care of a woman who experiences perinatal loss. This can be accessed at the following link:

<https://nbcpathway.org.uk/>

■ Care Homes: Visits

Emma Hardy:

[99719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the consistency of recommendations on visiting care homes in the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce: report on first phase of COVID-19 pandemic published on 18 September 2020 and the Adult social care: our COVID-19 winter plan 2020 to 2021.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Learning from the COVID-19 first wave is essential in building effective, ongoing contingency planning and resilience across the health and care system.

The Social Care COVID-19 Support Taskforce, set up and chaired by David Pearson (social care COVID-19 Lead for the National Health Service and past President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services), formed part of the Government's overall commitment to the sector. The Taskforce concluded at the end of August, and their recommendations have shaped our approach to tackling COVID-19 in the adult social care sector and, in particular, the plans we have put in place for winter.

The Winter plan, was published on 18 September and builds on the work of the Taskforce and sets out the actions we will be taking at a national level; and the actions that every local area (local authorities and NHS partners) and every care provider must be taking. This has included considering the Taskforce recommendations in respect to visiting care homes and introducing a range of measures which will enable residents and their loved ones to have safe visits to care homes.

■ Cerebral Palsy: Mental Health

Vicky Foxcroft:

[92839]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) assessment he has made and (b) monitoring he undertakes of the mental health of adults living with cerebral palsy.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[92840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mental health assessment tools are clinically effective for adults living with cerebral palsy.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline 'Cerebral palsy in adults', published in January 2019, and quality standard 'Cerebral palsy in adults', published in January 2020, set out best practice guidance for clinicians assessing and monitoring the mental health of adults living with cerebral palsy. They recommend that specialist multidisciplinary teams identify and address mental health problems alongside physical health problems at reviews, exploring with the patient (and their family and carers, if agreed) whether they have any concerns about their mood, irritability, behaviour, social interaction, sleep or general level of function. The guidance can be found at the following links:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG119

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs191

■ Childbirth: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova:

[102156]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 July 2020 to Question 75237, what definition of birth applies in the guidance produced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on women being encouraged to have a birth partner present during any type of labour and birth.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There is no definition of birth included in guidance produced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists but the guidance is clear that women should be encouraged to have one birth partner, who has no symptoms of COVID-19, present with them during any type of labour and birth, unless the birth occurs under general anaesthetic.

Community Care: Coronavirus**Peter Kyle:**[\[96963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to begin regular repeat covid-19 tests for district nurses who visit care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Our first priority continues to be to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in care homes and prevent future outbreaks, to ensure the health and safety of both care workers and residents.

We recognise the need to ensure professionals such as district nurses are able to visit care homes safely to provide vital care to residents. Therefore, alongside publishing guidance on infection prevention control measures for health and social care professionals, we are also currently running a pilot to test professionals who visit care homes weekly in Northamptonshire, Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. This includes all professionals that visit care homes two or more times a week and where carrying out their role requires them to be within one metre of residents.

We will use the data from this pilot to consider the next steps for testing professionals, including district nurses, who visit care homes and we will continue to review our social care testing strategy in light of the latest evidence and available capacity.

Contact Tracing: Coronavirus**Navendu Mishra:**[\[89868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to seek advice on test and trace from those European partners that have had functioning systems in place since May 2020 instead of working with the private sector.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Test and Trace service which was launched in England on 28 May, brings together testing, contact tracing and outbreak management into an end-to-end service to combat the spread of COVID-19 transmission. This involves working across local government and local communities, Public Health England, other national bodies and a wide range of partner organisations.

We have developed a test and trace service that is best for the needs of the United Kingdom and for the National Health Service, but we continue to follow guidance from the World Health Organization and we are learning from international best practice. We are working closely with other countries to understand the most effective ways for

reaching as many cases and contacts as possible in order to reduce the spread of the virus.

■ **Coronavirus: Christchurch**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[90034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people resident in the Christchurch constituency have received covid-19 tests in each of the last seven days; and how many requests for tests from those residents have been unsuccessful in each of the last seven days.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Jon Trickett:

[74450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish his Department's action plan to respond to local covid-19 lock-downs.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The response to local COVID-19 outbreaks is being co-ordinated at a local level with support from the Department. £300 million in funding has been made available and we are working closely with local authorities to help develop their responses to outbreaks.

By their nature local outbreak control plans are dynamic documents that will need to be adjusted in line with local conditions. For this reason they will not be held centrally, but each county and metropolitan authority has published their plan. We are in regular communication with the public regarding the work that is being delivered to tackle COVID-19, including updates about the implementation of local outbreak control plans and the weekly COVID-19 surveillance plan which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906073/Weekly_COVID19_Surveillance_Report_week_31_FINAL_V2.pdf

Further information on how we are supporting partners at a local level is published in the COVID-19 Contain Framework and NHS Test and Trace Business Plan which are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-nhs-test-and-trace-business-plan>

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[98858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in what circumstances children's parties are able to take place consistent with Government covid-19 regulations.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: From 14 September, there are limits on the number of people you can see socially. When meeting friends and family you do not live with (or have not formed a support bubble with) you must not meet in a group of more than six, indoors or outdoors. A children's party can take place if it is limited to six people or one household or support bubble.

Further details are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>

Mark Pritchard:

[99565]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will amend government guidance to allow groups of up to 30 people to attend (a) Narcotics Anonymous meetings and (b) other mutual aid meetings provided that social distancing rules are observed.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Currently, support groups can take place in groups of up to 15 in a public place, if the support group is organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support to its members or those who attend its meetings. This includes, but is not limited to, providing support:

- to victims of crime (including domestic abuse);
- to those with, or recovering from, addictions (including alcohol, narcotics or other substance addictions) or addictive patterns of behaviour;
- to new and expectant parents;
- to those with, or caring for persons with, any long-term illness, disability or terminal condition or who are vulnerable;
- to those facing issues related to their sexuality or identity including those living as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender; and
- to those who have suffered bereavement.

We have to rightly balance the need for those to attend support groups, against the risk of transmission in large groups which is why we have limited the number to 15.

■ Coronavirus: Greater London

Helen Hayes:

[85083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure covid-19 test facilities are accessible locally in Lambeth and Southwark.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 September 2020]: The Government has put in place the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history, including 74 drive-through sites, 61 walk-through sites, 21 satellite test sites, 236 mobile testing units, home testing and satellite kits and five Lighthouse laboratories

In respect of tests being accessible locally in Southwark and Lambeth, a Regional Test site operates in the neighbouring Greenwich and Mobile Testing Units move around the neighbouring areas frequently, such as Southwark, Bromley, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. A Local Test site will be live from 11 September in Southwark and there are already sites set up in Newham, Lewisham. Further sites are planned to be set up in September at Tower Hamlets and Greenwich.

Stella Creasy:[\[86032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many tests have been taken at each covid-19 testing centre in London on each day since 31 August 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[91134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) void rate and (b) number of void tests was for Lighthouse Laboratories under Pillar 2 for the last month.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

Mr Gregory Campbell:[\[92709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were tested for covid-19 from 2 September to 9 September 2020; and how many of those who tested positive were aged between four and 16 years old.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Wansbeck**Ian Lavery:**[\[86048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of covid-19 tests that have taken place each week in Wansbeck constituency since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Ian Lavery: [95636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people accessed the covid-19 test centre in Wansbeck constituency on each day since that centre opened.

Ian Lavery: [95638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children in Wansbeck constituency have been tested for covid-19 since schools reopened.

Helen Whately:

The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

■ Dementia: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [99679]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to mitigate the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on people with dementia and their carers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: The Government has taken a range of action to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic, including for people with dementia and unpaid carers.

We commissioned research through the National Institute for Health Research on how to manage or mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia and their carers living in the community. Concise advice based on this research for people with dementia and their carers is available at the following link:

<http://www.idealproject.org.uk/covid/>

Guidance for care homes and for carers on how best to support people living with dementia during the pandemic as well as wider advice for unpaid carers has also been made available. In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement has issued guidance to the health service on the adjustments that are needed across the NHS Dementia Well Pathway.

Support for recovery and managing any ongoing symptoms is also available at the following link:

<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>

■ Dementia: Health Services

Stuart Anderson: [99118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the BAME community in (a) Wolverhampton and (b) England to access dementia-related care when needed.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to delivering high quality care and support for every person with dementia regardless of age, background or culture, and central to this is the provision of personalised care.

NHS England and NHS Improvement published Phase 3 of COVID-19 response in which they asked all trusts and partners to address inequality in the National Health Service provision and outcomes including an urgent action to restore NHS services inclusively, so that they are used by those in greatest need.

Nationally, media spend has been upweighted to target black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) audiences including press, radio, digital display and social.

We have also provided financial support to the Race Equality Foundation to provide additional services to BAME communities with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The money is part of a UK-wide £750 million package of support for the voluntary sector announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in April.

Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group works with the Wolverhampton Mental Health Stakeholder Forum to engage with BAME and community groups to influence ongoing work with commissioners and providers to support the development of culturally competent services and pathways.

■ Dementia: Research**Alex Norris:**[\[100517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to implement the Government's commitment to double dementia research funding to over £160 million a year.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: The Government remains strongly committed to supporting research into dementia and the United Kingdom research community is playing a significant role in the global effort to find a cure or a major disease-modifying treatment by 2025.

The Government's 2020 Challenge contained the commitment to spend £300 million on dementia research over the five years to March 2020. This commitment was delivered a year early with £341 million spent on dementia research over the four years to 31 March 2019. We are currently working on ways to boost significantly further research on dementia at all stages on the translation pathway including medical and care interventions.

■ Doctors: Training**Drew Hendry:**[\[99023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the General Medical Council on the difference in English

language requirements necessary for doctors to access (a) the Foundation Programme and (b) GMC licensing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: The Department has regular contact with the General Medical Council (GMC) including on the English language requirements for practising medicine in the United Kingdom. The GMC is required by law to be assured that any doctor applying for registration as an international medical graduate has demonstrated, at the point of registration, that they possess the required level of English. The GMC has set its requirements at the level it believes best safeguards patient safety, whilst ensuring it does not inappropriately disrupt overseas recruitment.

Employers and training providers are entitled to set their own requirements as part of their selection processes which may reflect their specific needs in relation to their training and working environments. This means entry requirements to the UK Foundation Programme may differ from the minimum required for GMC registration.

■ **Endometriosis: Diagnosis**

Colleen Fletcher:

[102093]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time taken is for women with endometriosis to receive that diagnosis in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: Data on average waiting times for women with endometriosis to receive a diagnosis is not held centrally.

■ **Funerals: Coronavirus**

Crispin Blunt:

[98661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is permitted for up to 30 people attending a funeral to attend a memorial on (a) the same day and (b) a future day during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 7 October 2020]: We recognise how important it is to be able to attend the funeral of a loved one. That is why there is an exemption so that up to 30 people can attend a funeral.

Pre-funeral and post-funeral ceremonies may be held for up to 15 people in line with the guidance on [staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#). However, families may consider deferring a celebration or memorial service, until further social restrictions are lifted and at a time when attendance can take place safely.

Guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july>

Robert Halfon:

[99589]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the 30 person limit on funerals during the covid-19 outbreak includes funeral directors and staff members.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Funerals should have no more than 30 attendees. Attendance should also be kept within the capacity constraints of the venue, so that social distancing can continue to be adhered to.

Anyone working, for example officiants, staff employed by the venue or third party staff are not included in the 30 person limit.

■ **Health Professions: Coronavirus**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[89617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the effect of local covid-19 restrictions on healthcare workers that rely on childcare provided by extended family members.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The Government is aware of the sacrifices that people in local lockdown are making and the important role key workers are making for our economy. We introduced childcare bubbles in areas where local COVID-19 restrictions are in place, to allow families to share caring responsibilities with another household for children under 14.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with NHS Employers and Department for Education colleagues to publish guidance for National Health Service organisations during COVID-19 in respect to childcare. This guidance encourages employers to be as flexible as possible to support staff with childcare (and caring) responsibilities, utilising their existing local policies. The guidance is available on NHS Employers website at the following link:

www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/supporting-staff-with-childcare-responsibilities

■ **Hearing Impairment: Medical Treatments**

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[97759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if ear wax stringing can be made available on the NHS to patients whose build-up of ear wax is directly linked with hearing loss.

Edward Argar:

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a statutory responsibility to commission cost-effective healthcare and develop strategic clinical plans covering a wide range of health care services based on the needs of their local population.

There are a range of services known as core services that all general practitioner (GP) practices are expected to provide and enhanced services that GP practices are commissioned to provide over and above this. The provision of ear syringing is an example of an enhanced service. If a local CCG has decided not to commission an enhanced service, this may relate to population needs and value for money.

If the build-up of earwax is linked with hearing loss, then the GP practice could consider referring the patient into audiology services. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published guidelines in June 2018 on hearing loss. These can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng98>

■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus

Clive Efford:

[90031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to minimise the risk of domiciliary care workers spreading the covid-19 virus.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: Expansion of asymptomatic testing for SARS-CoV-2 in domiciliary care workers is being guided by the results from the Public Health England point prevalence survey of domiciliary care workers. This study found that COVID-19 prevalence among domiciliary care workers was similar to prevalence in the general population. Based on the evidence, the report does not recommend rolling out asymptomatic testing to domiciliary workers unless recommended by local risk assessments or in response to local outbreaks. Symptomatic staff should continue to access priority testing via the Pillar 2 testing service. We are currently reviewing the implications for asymptomatic testing in domiciliary care. Domiciliary care providers should continue to ensure that staff are appropriately supported to follow current guidance and that staff have appropriate personal protective equipment and training on its use, following national guidance.

■ Hospices: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[99042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2020 to Question 88902 on Hospices: Finance, how much of the £200 million for hospices has been (a) allocated and (b) received by hospices to date.

Helen Whately:

On 8 April 2020, the Chancellor announced funding of up to £200 million for hospices as part of the £750 million funding package for the voluntary and charitable sector. This funding supported them in increasing capacity of NHS services and providing stability as we managed our response at a critical stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department is currently in the process of reconciling the payments that have both been made and received by hospices to date, and regularly assesses the financial effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospice sector. Through NHS

England and NHS Improvement, we are engaged in regular discussions with key stakeholders in the hospice sector regarding the challenges they face.

■ Hospitals: Parking

Damian Green:

[\[100272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what enforcement powers he has to require hospital trusts to make disabled parking bays free.

Edward Argar:

These new requirements are being mandated through the NHS Standard Contract, to make car parking more consistent across England. The 2020/21 contract asked the National Health Service in England to do all it can to implement them from April 2020, and requires it to do so from January 2021.

■ Leasehold: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[43067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that residents in communal living leasehold arrangements are able to access testing for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

Testing is available to all symptomatic people across the whole of the United Kingdom through a range of physical and digital testing channels. Anyone with any of the three main COVID-19 symptoms should self-isolate and access a test as soon as possible. This includes both essential workers and the wider public.

■ Members: Correspondence

Janet Daby:

[\[98288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon Member for Lewisham East of 1 July 2020 on the recognition of NHS and key workers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 October 2020]: The Department replied to the hon. Member's letter on 6 October 2020.

■ Mental Health Services: Children

Jim Shannon:

[\[100387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the provision of children's mental health services and adult services for children once they reach the age of 18.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Our ambition in the NHS Long Term Plan is to create a comprehensive offer for 0-25 year olds that reaches across mental health services for children, young people and

adults. New models of care are being developed to ensure young adults aged 18 -25 receive age appropriate support.

Local systems will be able to choose from a menu of models and will be expected to plan for their roll-out from 2021 to ensure that all areas have a comprehensive offer in place for 18-25 year olds by 2023/24.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Cat Smith:

[\[100446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 October 2020 to Question 94459 on Mental Health Services: Children and Young People, what the estimated cost to the public purse is of hiring Snapchat influencers to promote the Every Mind Matters campaign.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: £20,000 was invested in using 32 influencers to promote mental health self-care messages to young people as part of the Better Health-Every Mind Matters campaign. So far there have been 1.9 million views of this influencer content.

Jim Shannon:

[\[99610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on implementing the proposals of the Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Green Paper; and what plans he has to fast-track that implementation in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have made good progress on, and remain committed to, carrying out the Green Paper's core proposals. In 2018 we announced the first 25 trailblazer sites delivering 59 mental health support teams in and near schools and colleges with the first becoming operational earlier this year. In July 2019, NHS England confirmed a further 57 areas would develop 123 new mental health support teams and a number of these have been commissioned and training has begun.

Twelve of the trailblazer sites, are also testing four-week waiting times specialist NHS services. They remain on track to deliver a recommendation in 2021/22 for the phased introduction of an access and waiting time standard for children and young people's mental health.

We will continue to work with the National Health Service, Public Health England and other experts to gather evidence and assess the potential longer-term mental health impacts on children and young people and plan for how best to support them throughout the coming weeks and months.

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus

Jonathan Ashworth:

[102080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to assess the effect of covid-19 on NHS mental health services; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: We recognise the pressures on mental health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. National Health Service mental health services have remained open for business throughout this time, including delivering support digitally and by phone. For those with severe needs or in crisis, NHS mental health providers have established all-age 24 hours per day, seven days a week mental health crisis lines.

We are working with the NHS, Public Health England and other key partners to gather evidence and assess the potential longer-term mental health impacts, and plan for how to support mental health and wellbeing throughout the coming weeks and months. In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working at pace on their winter planning for NHS mental health services, to help them respond to demand.

■ Neuromuscular Disorders: Medical Equipment

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[95002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the equity of access to cough-assist treatments for people suffering with (a) motor neurone disease and (b) other muscle-atrophying conditions.

Helen Whately:

Local commissioners are responsible for making sure cough-assist treatments are provided for people suffering with motor neurone disease (MND) and other muscle-atrophying conditions, according to local need and in line with best practice guidance. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence produced the 'Motor neurone disease: assessment and management' guideline in February 2016, which covers assessing and managing MND. It aims to improve care from the time of diagnosis, and covers information and support, organisation of care, managing symptoms and preparing for end of life care. This guideline includes recommendations for when to administer a range of treatments for assisting cough effectiveness and is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng42/resources/motor-neurone-disease-assessment-and-management-pdf-1837449470149>

■ NHS Property Services: Subsidiary Companies

Karin Smyth: [\[97631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications by NHS trusts for permission for the formation of a wholly owned subsidiary company to manage property and estates included an appraisal of the option for NHS Property Services to manage those services.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement published new guidance in November 2018 which updated the way wholly owned subsidiaries are reported to and approved by NHS England and NHS Improvement. Since that time, 34 proposals have been reported to them for classification and potential review.

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not hold data on the number of applications for the formation of a whole owned subsidiary company to manage property and estates that included an appraisal of the option for NHS Property Services to manage those services.

■ NHS: Computer Software

Mr Steve Baker: [\[100376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise the (a) further development and (b) deployment of a coronavirus risk calculator through the NHS App.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: The NHS COVID-19 App already includes several features that are designed to help identify and manage risk for individuals and communities.

For contact tracing, the app detects and logs other nearby app users using random unique identifiers. If any of those users later test positive for COVID-19, close contacts will receive an exposure alert with advice to self-isolate.

When a user first registers for the app they are asked for the first half of their postcode. They can check the app every day to see if where they live has become a high-risk area for COVID-19. If it has, they will also receive a notification. This will help them make daily decisions to protect themselves and those close to them.

The app was launched following positive trials and rigorous testing. It is accurate, responsive and has received positive feedback from users. We continue to work to optimise the app and will keep further improvements under review.

■ NHS: Pensions

Fiona Bruce: [\[96846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of permitting NHS staff to nominate a child

instead of a partner to receive pension benefits in the event of the death of the staff member.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: The NHS Pension Scheme already provides a generous set of protections for dependants in the event of a scheme member's death. Pension benefits include a life assurance lump sum, a surviving partner pension and a child pension. Scheme members are permitted to nominate a child to receive the lump sum death benefit. Dependent child pensions may be paid until age 23 or later if the child is unable to earn a living due to permanent physical or mental infirmity. The amount payable may be higher if no surviving adult pension is payable.

■ **NHS: Remote Working**

Ian Mearns:

[98213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to encourage the NHS to introduce a £6 per month payment for employees working from home to cover the increased costs of working in that way.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 October 2020]: There are no plans to introduce a £6 per month payment for National Health Service staff working from home. Employers do have local flexibility to pay an extra £6 per week for weekly paid employees or £26 per month for monthly paid employees should they choose to do so.

If required to work from home on a regular basis, it is possible for employees to claim tax relief for additional household costs for things like heating and water bills; this does not include costs that would remain the same regardless of working at home or in an office, like rent and council tax.

The full guidance on tax relief can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>

■ **Nurses: Coronavirus**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[96150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to update guidance for workplaces to ensure that health risks for nurses who shielded during the covid-19 lockdown are minimised.

Helen Whately:

NHS Employers have produced guidance for National Health Service organisations to support all staff returning to work after shielding during the COVID-19 lockdown which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/staff-terms-and-conditions/staff-terms-and-conditions-faqs/pay#Shielding>

The Government expects employers to undertake an individual risk assessment to support those staff who have been shielding to determine whether it is appropriate to return to work and to understand what measures could be introduced to ensure the safety of employees, with the relevant adjustments being made to minimise health risks.

When local lockdowns or restrictions are put in place employers are expected to revise their plans for supporting people to return to the workplace based on the latest Government and local authority advice.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor: [\[100503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average length of time was for Public Health England to respond to schools reporting positive covid-19 cases in each week since August 2020.

Helen Whately:

Public Health England does not collect the data in the format requested.

■ Sexually Transmitted Infections: Research

David Linden: [\[99718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has allocated funding to the research on neonatal herpes.

Edward Argar:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and is the largest public funder of health research in the United Kingdom.

The NIHR funds a range of research in maternal and neonatal health focussing on the safety of maternity and neonatal services, and the national maternity ambition to halve maternal deaths, stillbirths and neonatal deaths and brain injury by 2025.

The NIHR is not currently funding any specific research into neonatal herpes but it welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including neonatal herpes. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. In all disease areas, the amount of NIHR funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity.

■ Social Services

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[98295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy not to activate again the easements provided for in the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 October 2020]: The Department has kept easements under regular review, taking expert clinical and social care advice, and has concluded that easements have been used appropriately by local authorities and the provision to use them should remain in place at this time.

■ Social Services: Disability

Apsana Begum: [99744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason his Department has not issued guidance on the reopening of social care day centres for people with disabilities.

Apsana Begum: [99745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to publish updated guidance on the reopening of social care day centres for people with disabilities.

Apsana Begum: [99746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of provision of social day care for people with disabilities in (a) Poplar and Limehouse constituency and (b) the UK.

Apsana Begum: [99747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to allocate funding to enable the reopening of social care day centres for people with disabilities.

Apsana Begum: [99748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussion he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on additional funding to support the reopening of social care day centres for people with disabilities.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: The Government recognises that day services are an important form of support for people with disabilities and those that care for them. We have worked with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance to help make decisions on restarting services and to provide quality care safely which is available at the following link:

<https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/day-care/safe-delivery>

Ensuring the care and support needs of their populations are met is the responsibility of local authorities. No central assessment has been made of the adequacy of provision of social day care for people with disabilities in Poplar and Limehouse constituency and the United Kingdom.

However, on 17 September 2020, the Government announced that it would provide a further £546 million to Adult Social Care through the Infection Control Fund,

alongside the Adult Social Care Winter Plan. Up to 20% of this fund can be allocated by local authorities for COVID-19 infection control measures outside of care homes and community care provision. This includes implementing infection control measures to support the resumption of community and day services. In total the Government has provided over £1.1 billion in funding for infection control measures. This is in addition to making £3.7 billion available to local authorities to address pressures on local services caused by COVID-19, including adult social care.

■ Spinal Muscular Atrophy

Jim Shannon:

[\[91039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy in the UK by (a) age and (b) gender in the last five years.

Helen Whately:

NHS Digital does not hold a list/register of all patients that have been diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy. However, data is available on the first period of admitted patient care under one consultant within one health care provider known as finished admission episodes. This is set out in the attached table showing the count of finished admission episodes with a primary diagnosis of spinal muscular atrophy in England by patient age group and gender in each year from 2015-16 to 2019-20.

It should be noted that this information is not a specific count of people, as an individual may have more than one admission in any given period. As health is a devolved matter, it would be for the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to make decisions about collecting data in their respective countries.

■ Thalidomide

Dan Carden:

[\[97011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to renew the thalidomide health grant in April 2023.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: While we are unable to take commit future funds at this time, ahead of the forthcoming Spending Review, we remain committed to supporting thalidomiders to live a full and independent life. We are working closely with the Thalidomide Trust to consider how thalidomiders can be best supported in the future.

■ Tinnitus: Research

Hilary Benn:

[\[99526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been spent on research on the causes of, and treatment for, tinnitus in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: The Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including tinnitus. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. Information on individual projects funded by the NIHR can be found at the following link:

<https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/>

NIHR support for tinnitus research was over £1.8 million between 2015/16 and 2019/20. This included funding for research projects, and funding for NIHR managed infrastructure to support tinnitus research. Current NIHR funding includes £15 million over five years from April 2017 to support deafness and hearing loss research in NIHR's Manchester, University College London, and Nottingham Biomedical Research Centres (BRCs). The Nottingham BRC has a core research theme on tinnitus and noise sensitivity.

HOME OFFICE**■ Immigration: EU Nationals****Claire Hanna:****[102954]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the changes to the immigration rules of 24 August 2020, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing non-EU citizens to prove their identity using a valid passport rather than an in-date biometric residence permit as part of their application to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

Non-EU citizens applying to the EU Settlement Scheme in the UK can prove their identity using a valid passport, biometric residence card or biometric residence permit.

Where they are applying to the scheme online from outside the UK, they need to use a valid biometric residence card for this purpose, as this is compatible with the identity verification app available as part of the online application process. A non-EU citizen who is unable to apply to the scheme from outside the UK because they do not have a valid biometric residence card can apply for an EU Settlement Scheme family permit to travel to the UK and then apply to the scheme in-country.

■ Members: Correspondence**John Spellar:****[100284]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when UKVI plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 10 August 2020 regarding Mrs Isik.

Kevin Foster:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the Rt Hon. Member's correspondence.

A response was sent on 14 October.

Police: Coronavirus**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[102951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to provide additional support to police forces for enforcement of (a) social distancing and (b) other covid-19 restrictions on (i) 31 October and (ii) 5 November 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has been clear that it will provide police forces with the support they need to continue protecting the public and keeping communities safe through the coronavirus pandemic.

The government continues to work closely with policing partners on the approach to managing the pandemic and any changes.

On 8 October the Government announced an additional £30m for police forces in England and Wales to step up their enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions through the autumn and winter months.

Police: ICT**Mrs Maria Miller:**[\[99541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which senior police officer is responsible for the police's national strategy for digital Intelligence and investigations including online abuse.

Kit Malthouse:

Commissioner Ian Dyson, City of London Police and Chair of IMORCC (Information Management & Operational Requirements Coordination Committee), is the senior police officer who led on the development of the National Policing Digital Strategy (Digital, Data and Technology Strategy 2020-2030).

One key ambition of the Strategy is investment to ensure policing, from leadership through to the front line, are equipped with the right digital knowledge, skills and tools to deal with increasingly complex crimes. A further ambition of the Strategy is to harness the power of digital technologies and behaviours to identify the risk of harm and protect the vulnerable in both the physical and the digital world.

UK Border Force: Correspondence**Layla Moran:**[\[100529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on what mail is opened by Border Force.

Chris Philp:

Border Force routinely carries out risk based inspections of post and parcels imported into the UK. The purpose of this is to both deter and prevent the entry of goods that would harm the national interest and the safety of its citizens.

Section 159 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 as amended by regulation 7 of the Postal Packets (Revenue and Customs) Regulations 2011 provides the power for designated Customs officials to inspect, and open, any postal packet for the purpose of examining anything that designated Customs officials suspect it may contain, for example, goods which may not have duty paid or are prohibited or restricted. The interception of postal communications for investigatory purposes is not undertaken by Border Force, and can only be authorised for a competent authority by a warrant under Part 2 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Insulation****Dr Matthew Offord:****[100374]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when Michael Wade's recommendations to Government on (a) funding solutions to protect leaseholders from unaffordable costs of fixing historic defects and (b) insurance issues around building safety will be published.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is clear that it is unacceptable for leaseholders to have to worry about the cost of fixing historic safety defects in their buildings that they did not cause. Government [adviser Michael Wade is developing a financing solution that will help to protect leaseholders from unaffordable remediation costs. We must remove barriers to fixing historic defects and identify financing solutions that protect leaseholders from unaffordable costs; but we must also ensure that the bill does not fall unfairly](#) on taxpayers. We will update on progress made to protect leaseholders from unaffordable costs before the final Bill is introduced to Parliament.

■ Domestic Abuse: Coronavirus**Jess Phillips:****[102825]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many of the new bed spaces provided by the £10 million domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund are provided by services or organisations whose sole purpose is to support victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Kelly Tolhurst:

To be eligible for funding through the MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Emergency Support Fund, applicants needed to be charities providing domestic abuse safe accommodation services in England, as stated in the

Fund Prospectus, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/890420/MHCLG_COVID-19_Emergency_Support_Fund_-_updated_prospectus.pdf.

Of the total 147 successful applications, there were 101 applications from organisations whose sole purpose is to support victims of domestic abuse and related forms of abuse.

We have extended the period for which applicants can spend their grant funding and deliver their outcome by, and this may result in some changes to initial applications. We are therefore unable to provide a breakdown of beds, in the manner requested, at this time.

Jess Phillips:

[102826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many new beds are being provided by each organisation that was successful in bidding for funding from £10 million domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund.

Kelly Tolhurst:

In total the successful recipients of the MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Emergency Support Fund proposed opening 1546 additional beds to meet increased demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have extended the period for which applicants can spend their grant funding and deliver their outcome by, and this may result in some changes to initial applications. We are therefore unable to provide a breakdown of beds, in the manner requested, at this time.

Jess Phillips:

[102827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what quality standards were used in the commissioning of new domestic abuse bed spaces under the £10 million domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Emergency Support Fund was open for safe accommodation charities, including refuges, to apply for funding to maintain their existing level of service or create additional temporary beds to meet the anticipated demand resulting from the pandemic.

To be eligible for funding, applicants had to commit to meet the standards set out within the MHCLG Quality Standards, which can be found in Annex B in the Fund Prospectus in the link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/890420/MHCLG_COVID-19_Emergency_Support_Fund_-_updated_prospectus.pdf

Jess Phillips:

[102828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many of the new bed spaces provided under the £10 million domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund are provided by Community Interest Companies.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Of the successful recipients of the MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Emergency Support Fund, there was one organisation that was a Community Interest Company.

We have extended the period for which applicants can spend their grant funding and deliver their outcome by, and this may result in some changes to initial applications.

We are therefore unable to provide a breakdown of beds, in the manner requested, at this time.

Jess Phillips:

[102829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many of the new bed spaces provided under the £10 million domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund are planned to exist for six months or less.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Emergency Support Fund aimed to ensure safe accommodation charities, including refuges, could continue to provide support to victims and their children during the pandemic. Charities could apply for funds to create additional temporary provision to meet short-term increases in demand as a result of the pandemic.

The timescales for additional beds created by this fund will vary depending on local circumstances and arrangements put in place by bidders. Charities can now request to extend the spending period beyond the original 31 October deadline.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker:

[100375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the stay on eviction proceedings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government took urgent and necessary steps in the immediate face of a public health emergency to suspend housing possession action in the county courts between 27 March 2020 until 20 September 2020. This meant that neither cases in the system nor any about to go into it could progress to the stage at which someone could be legally evicted from their home. The latest government statistics for the period between April to June 2020 show that, as a result of the stay on possession proceedings, there were no bailiff repossessions recorded during this time.

The suspension of possession proceedings ended on 20 September 2020 and landlords are now able to progress their possession claims through the courts. We have published guidance on the possession action process which includes new rules to protect tenants and new processes and procedures which landlords need to follow.

To further protect renters over winter, we have legislated to increase notice periods to 6 months in all but the most serious circumstances and asked bailiffs not to carry out evictions over Christmas or in areas that are subject to a local lockdown where that includes a restriction on gatherings in homes

These measures build on the Government's major economic package of support including assistance for businesses to pay wages; boosting the welfare safety-net by more than £9 billion; increasing Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile; and providing £180 million funding for Discretionary Housing Payments, for local authorities to distribute to support renters needing additional help.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[100368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of residential blocks of over 18 metres in height which have unsafe cladding in (a) England, (b) London, (c) the Hendon constituency.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[100369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of building owners of properties with unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings have registered for his Department's £1 billion fund announced on 26 May 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department publishes data on the number of high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding systems unlikely to meet building regulations, including for the area of London. The latest data is available [here](#). Data is not published at parliamentary constituency level but local authority level data is available in [WebTable 3](#). The Department is reviewing its estimate of the number of residential blocks over 18 metres in height which have unsafe non-ACM cladding. Information on the registrations to the Building Safety Fund is available [here](#).

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle:

[\[100425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people were presented as homeless to all councils in England between July 2020 and October 2020.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We do not currently hold statutory homelessness statistics for the exact period stated. Data for July to September 2020 is expected to be published at the beginning of next year.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Pay**Philip Davies:**[\[100323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the biggest pay rise given to someone in his Department was in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms in the last 12 months.

Kelly Tolhurst:

During the 12 month period ending 30 September 2020 the largest salary increase for any member of staff, whilst working in the same role, within the Department was 21.4 per cent on the previous salary. This equated to £5990 in cash terms.

■ Monuments: Conservation**Peter Gibson:**[\[100545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting locally elected politicians greater powers to protect objects and monuments of local significance to their area that are in public ownership.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government believes it is important that local planning authorities are able to protect objects and monuments of local significance to their area. Our planning practice guidance encourages local planning authorities to create lists for local heritage assets which should have greater protection under the planning system. In September, building on this, the Secretary of State appointed an independent adviser to drive forward a campaign to mobilise communities across England to nominate heritage assets for inclusion in these local heritage lists. MHCLG is also providing £700,000 of funding to support this initiative.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Generalised System of Preferences: EU External Relations****Emily Thornberry:**[\[101255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what evidence the Government plans to use to assess the effective implementation of core human and labour rights UN/ILO conventions of countries accessing trade preferences under the least developed countries framework, general framework or enhanced framework.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[101256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what evidence will be used to assess the effective implementation of international conventions of countries accessing trade preferences under the enhanced framework.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[101257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish a report at least every two years on the implementation of (a) core human and labour rights UN/ILO conventions and (b) other international conventions by countries accessing trade preferences under the least developed countries framework, general framework and enhanced framework.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

At the end of the Transition Period, the United Kingdom will create her Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which will take a similar approach to the conditions in the EU GSP.

HM Government will draw on monitoring body reports and other assessments produced by international organisations – such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations – on an annual basis for all three tiers, as well as harnessing available information provided by our diplomatic network to reach our own decisions.

If any violations of the requirements resulted in a suspension of preferences, information will be reported publicly and communicated to Parliament.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Stephen Farry:

[\[101073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what effect the free trade agreement between the UK and Japan will have on businesses in Northern Ireland.

Greg Hands:

UK exports to Japan have been growing by an average of 7.6% year-on-year over the previous five years and, with this free trade deal in place, our economic partnership will have even more opportunity. Potential benefits from a deal include better jobs, higher wages, more choice and lower prices for all parts of the UK.

Northern Ireland stands to benefit and build upon its strong exports to Japan, with Northern Ireland's agri-food sector potentially benefiting from reduced export burdens. Last year Northern Ireland's exports of agri-food to Japan were worth £6.5m.

JUSTICE**■ Evictions: Coronavirus****Thangam Debbonaire:****[102870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his section 1.21 of his guidance for landlords and tenants entitled Will bailiffs enforce evictions across the Christmas period, for which categories of cases evictions will be permitted to proceed during the period covered by the winter truce.

Alex Chalk:

The Government has announced that evictions should not be carried out in England and Wales in the run up to and over Christmas and the New Year, from 11 December until 11 January, except in the most serious circumstances, such as cases involving anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse. This will ensure vulnerable tenants are not forced from their homes at a time when public and local authorities may be dealing with the usual level of increased demand for services during this time. A short list of the categories of cases which will be exempted from this “winter pause” will be issued well in advance of the Christmas period.

■ Marriage: Coronavirus**Steve McCabe:****[100283]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he enable local registry offices to permit wedding ceremonies to be held outdoors in the grounds of approved premises if covid-19 social distancing regulations cannot be complied with inside the premises.

Alex Chalk:

The Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission will conduct a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. This is an important and complex social policy reform and requires careful thought and consideration.

The Law Commission published its consultation paper on 3 September 2020 and the Government, following the final report, will decide on provision on the basis of the Law Commission’s recommendations.

In parallel, the Government made clear when it announced the Law Commission project that it would also, as an interim measure, undertake work to allow more civil weddings and civil partnerships to take place outdoors through secondary legislation. This work is ongoing.

The Government has published guidance on planning COVID-19 secure marriages and civil partnerships at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>.

■ Marriage: Humanism**Crispin Blunt:** [\[100274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of recognising Humanist Marriages in law following the 2014 Ministry of Justice review into marriages by non-religious belief organisations and the 2020 High Court ruling that a failure to recognise humanist marriages is discriminatory.

Crispin Blunt: [\[100275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the proposals from the Law Commission on Humanist Marriages, what steps he will take to recognise humanist marriages while a comprehensive reform of marriage law is undertaken.

Alex Chalk:

The Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission will conduct a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of that review, the Government invited the Law Commission to make recommendations about how marriage by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent. The Government will decide on provision on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendations.

The Law Commission published a consultation paper on 3 September 2020 as part of its review and will welcome responses from all.

■ Ministry of Justice: Pay**Philip Davies:** [\[100320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the biggest pay rise given to someone in his Department was in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms in the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

Between the period of 01/07/19 - 30/06/2020 the biggest pay rise given to someone in the Department was (a) 7.6 in percentage terms and (b) £7,059 in cash terms.

This pay increase, determined through the independent Prison Service Pay Review Body process and calculated as a percentage increase, was for Prison Service staff. HMPPS received the highest pay rise.

Figures are based on staff in post as at 30 June who received their pay awards in September which were backdated to 1 April. Figures do not include annual pay increases for staff in the National Probation Service which have yet to be confirmed and paid and excludes pay award for SCS grades as not yet implemented.

■ Ministry of Justice: Written Questions**Philip Davies:** [\[100315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's internal guidance for officials on the drafting of answers to parliamentary

questions; and if he will set out his Department's step by step sign off procedure before Ministerial approval is given to answers.

Alex Chalk:

This government values the ongoing work of MPs and Peers whose scrutiny, whether through written Parliamentary Questions or other methods, is an invaluable part of our democratic process.

The Ministry of Justice's internal guidance for answering parliamentary questions was updated and published on the Department's intranet in April 2020. I will arrange for a copy of the attached guidance to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

In addition, the Cabinet Office has produced guidance for civil servants on drafting answers to parliamentary questions. This may be found on the gov.uk website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drafting-answers-to-parliamentary-questions-guidance>

Parliamentary questions are cleared by Senior Civil Servants in the relevant policy area, then Special Advisers, before receiving final sign off from Ministers.

Attachments:

1. parliamentary questions guidance [parliamentary-questions-guidance (1).doc]

■ **Prisons: Video Conferencing**

Alex Cunningham:

[101003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisons in England and Wales have a prison video link.

Lucy Frazer:

101 sites across the men's, women's and youth custody estate have at least one prison video link. Work is in hand with the aim of equipping all prisons with video links by the end of this financial year, subject to any unforeseen impacts of Covid-19.

■ **Youth Custody**

Peter Kyle:

[102884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to page 21 of the report entitled Childhood in the time of Covid, published by the Children's Commissioner in September 2020, what steps he is taking to reverse the decline in advocacy referrals by people in the youth custodial estate.

Lucy Frazer:

Ensuring the wellbeing of children in custody is of the utmost importance, especially during a period of unprecedented challenge. The Youth Custody Service (YCS) is committed to working with Barnardo's to deliver an advocacy model that best meets the needs of children and young people, while taking account of the need to reduce the risk of spreading the Covid-19 virus. As an on-demand service, it is important that children are aware of the service and how to access provision. As such, there has

been regular communication and information to children to advise them of service delivery during the COVID-19 period, with further communications shared with Governors and Directors detailing the revised service and protocols which include a safeguarding protocol.

To ensure the distinct needs of children in custody are met, the YCS, working with colleagues from NHS England & NHS Improvement, has developed a set of youth-specific Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs), with priority given to education and physical education, visits and advocacy. The advocacy EDM was implemented across all under 18 Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) and Secure Training Centres across July and August.

The YCS discusses referral trends directly with the provider to ensure there is a consistent service, and will continue to do so. Since the return of advocates to sites, internal data indicates referrals to the service have increased. Advocates continue to check in with every wing. They are able to have direct contact with young people in their rooms using the in-room telephony service where available, and arrange to meet face-to-face as required. Regular review meetings have continued to take place between Governors and Directors and Barnardo's.

■ Youth Offending Teams: Coronavirus

Peter Kyle:

[102885]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to improve digital communication between (a) youth offending teams and (b) young people and their families during the covid-19 pandemic.

Lucy Frazer:

Local authorities are responsible for the delivery of Youth Offending Team (YOT) provision.

However, the Youth Justice Board has oversight of Youth Offending Teams and has taken steps, in light of Covid-19, to support YOTs to improve digital communication with young people and their families. It has amended the terms and conditions in the Youth Justice Grant for 2020/21 to provide for capital spend, allowing flexibility for Youth Offending Teams to use funds, as appropriate, from their annual grant to provide children under their supervision access to suitable equipment to facilitate regular virtual engagement.

Practitioners have also developed innovative ways of providing positive interventions, using technology wherever possible. Similarly, many referral order panels have been conducted virtually. Face to face contacts, maintaining physical distance, have been used if the risk is deemed justified. Youth Offending Teams are working with highly vulnerable children and are working to use digital technology to make a positive change.

SCOTLAND**Local Growth Deals: Ayrshire****Alan Brown:**[\[102872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2020 to Question 84291, whether it is still his Department's plan for the final sign off of the Ayrshire Growth Deal to be by the end of October 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Alister Jack:

I am delighted to confirm that we intend to sign the Ayrshire Growth Deal in November.

All partners have worked tirelessly to get to this point and I look forward to continued collaborative efforts with local partners, the private sector, and the Scottish Government to develop this ambitious £251.5 million programme for transformative and inclusive economic growth across the region, which will include £103 million from the UK Government.

TRANSPORT**Aviation: Security****Kate Osamor:**[\[100500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to increase the restriction on aircraft crew carrying liquids through security at airports to less than two litres.

Kate Osamor:[\[100501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he make an assessment of the potential merits of lifting the liquid restriction for aircraft crew carrying liquids through security at airports.

Robert Courts:

Aviation security remains a priority for the Government. There are currently no plans to lift or increase the levels of liquid currently permitted to be carried by aircraft crew through security. We do however regularly assess our security measures to ensure they are proportionate and effective, including taking advice from the Civil Aviation Authority.

Bicycles: Repairs and Maintenance**Sarah Olney:**[\[102895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on the number of his Department's bike repair vouchers that have been used by low-income households.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department holds no information on this. Applicants for the first pilot tranche of vouchers were not asked for details of their household income. To date, 62,101 vouchers have been issued in the pilot release.

Sarah Olney:**[102896]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department's plans for further provision of bike repair schemes will target people on the lowest incomes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has no current plans to target bike repair vouchers at low income households for the remainder of the pilot phase, but will keep this under review for future releases. The Department will also be working with a national cycling charity for the next release to ensure that a portion of vouchers reach people with disabilities.

■ Cycling and Walking: Oxford**Layla Moran:****[100535]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has received a bid from Oxfordshire City Council for a walking and cycling path on the B4044 as part of the tranche 2 emergency active travel fund.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Oxfordshire County Council's bid for funding from tranche 2 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund did not include a bid for funding for this particular scheme. Details of how this scheme is being taken forward can be found on Oxfordshire County Council's website at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/roadworks/major-current-roadworks/botley-road-phase-1> .

■ Euston Station: Repairs and Maintenance**Michael Fabricant:****[100888]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans there are to restore the original Euston Arch at the reconstruction of Euston Station in London.

Andrew Stephenson:

Feasibility work in 2017 indicated that reconstruction of the Euston Arch would cost in excess of £50m and present challenges in terms of recovering the original construction materials. In developing the Masterplan for Euston Station, our development partner, Lendlease, is considering how the history of the station at Euston should influence and best be reflected in the future designs. We are determined to learn the lessons from the successful Kings Cross redevelopment, which has successfully used the restoration of our beautiful heritage railway architecture.

■ High Speed Two Railway Line: Construction

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[102673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the implications are for the construction timetable of the HS2 eastern leg following his announcement to defer decisions on that leg until the completion of the Integrated Rail Plan.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are committed to taking forward HS2 to transform our national rail network, bring our biggest cities closer together and level up opportunity across the country. On the Eastern Leg we have time to consider the best approach to get the most benefit for the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the North East, and want to ensure that this is well integrated with plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail and similar rail projects to get the best out of the significant investment in rail. The Integrated Rail Plan will confirm the form, scope and phasing of the HS2 Eastern Leg, and will be published later this year.

■ Lichfield Trent Valley Station: High Speed Two Railway Line

Michael Fabricant:

[\[100889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what fast services that stop at Lichfield Trent Valley will remain on the west coast mainline after the completion of High Speed Two (a) Phase 1 and (b) Phase 2a; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Stephenson:

No decisions have yet been taken on the train services that will operate on the west coast mainline after the beginning of HS2 services. These decisions will be taken nearer the time, drawing on advice from the West Coast Partnership and Network Rail, and will be subject to public consultation.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[102692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for East Londonderry sent on 28 July 2020 regarding help for the travel industry.

Robert Courts:

A response to your letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer was sent on 14 October.

■ Public Transport: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson:

[\[100544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) guidance on social distancing due to the covid-19 outbreak is being enforced on public transport and (b) reports of breaches from members of the public are taken seriously and investigated.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department's Safer Transport guidance and communications strongly advise passengers to maintain their distance where possible. Social Distancing is not required by law, however on 13 October 2020, Ministers from the Department for Transport met with transport sector representatives from all modes, and discussed the need for a renewed focus on enforcement and compliance with Coronavirus regulations and guidance.

According to British Transport Police (BTP) and Transport for London (TfL) data, over 165,000 interventions were made by officers against passengers refusing to comply with facial coverings regulations in the period up to 8 October. 7,731 passengers were prevented from boarding a service and 5,891 were directed to leave a service. BTP, TfL and police forces across the country issued 608 fixed penalty notices in the same period.

TREASURY■ **Apprentices: Taxation****Sarah Champion:**[\[100416\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to allow companies to defer payments of the Apprenticeship Levy during times of extreme financial stress.

Jesse Norman:

The Government does not consider that a deferral of the apprenticeship levy for businesses is necessary. HMRC have an excellent track record in supporting viable businesses with genuine short-term financial difficulties, including through the use of Time to Pay arrangements. HMRC will always work with all taxpayers, including businesses that are liable for Apprenticeship Levy, to find the best possible solution based on their specific circumstances.

■ **Broadband: Finance****Esther McVey:**[\[100990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to increase the £5 billion of Government funding for the delivery nationwide one-gigabit-capable broadband.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government recognises the importance of connectivity both to the economy and to people's lives. We are committed to nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible, and are taking a number of steps to achieve this.

The March Budget this year committed £5 billion to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in the hardest to reach areas. This is the largest ever public investment by a UK government in digital connectivity.

As well as this, the government is encouraging competition and making it easier for commercial investment in gigabit-capable broadband. For example, we have

introduced legislation to make it easier to install gigabit-capable broadband in blocks of flats, and confirmed we will legislate to ensure new build homes are built with gigabit-capable broadband.

The Comprehensive Spending Review, which will be published in the autumn, will set out the government's spending plans.

■ **Child Benefit: Coronavirus**

Drew Hendry:

[102111]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of extending the three month grace period for parents in receipt of child benefit who could not register the birth of a child as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced on 7 April 2020 that, as General Register Offices have been closed or operating at a reduced capacity during the COVID-19 outbreak, HM Revenue and Customs would allow parents to claim Child Benefit for their newborns without having to register their child's birth first, to ensure they do not miss out on Child Benefit payments. Child Benefit can be backdated for up to three months.

The press release announcing these measures is at:

www.gov.uk/government/news/dont-miss-out-claim-child-benefit-by-phone-or-post-hmrc-tells-new-parents

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Jon Trickett:

[100293]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many employees were on furlough under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme as at 1st September 2020.

Jon Trickett:

[100295]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people in each region of the UK were in receipt of the Coronavirus Retention Scheme as at 1 September 2020.

Jesse Norman:

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) published statistics about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on 18 September 2020 which include figures for jobs furloughed for the UK and by country and region as at 31 July. These are the latest figures available, and can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-september-2020>

Information on the number of employees furloughed (rather than employments furloughed) is not available; a person may have multiple employments.

The next release of these statistics will provide data on employments furloughed for the UK and each country and region as at 31 August. This is due to be published on 22 October. More information on this release can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-october-2020>

■ **Duty Free Allowances: Scotland**

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [102712]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what economic impact assessment he has undertaken of (a) not extending tax-free shopping to EU-bound passengers from 1 January 2021, and (b) withdrawing tax-free shopping from passengers travelling to non-EU destinations from 1 January 2021; and if he will publish that impact assessment.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [102713]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Government's decision to withdraw tax-free shopping for international visitors from 1 January 2021, what the total value of tax-free spend was in (a) Edinburgh and (b) Glasgow in 2019.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [102714]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) long-haul air travel demand and (b) and long-haul connectivity at Scottish airports of the cessation of tax-free shopping for passengers from 1 January 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

Ahead of the end of the transition period, the Government has announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers). The following rules will apply from 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) will be able to purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.
- Personal allowances will apply to passengers entering Great Britain from a destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.
- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain will not be extended to EU residents and will be withdrawn for all passengers.
- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods will be removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation which ran from 11 March to 20 May. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government is also continuing to meet and discuss with stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes are included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-09-11/hcws448> and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-duty-free-and-tax-free-goods-carried-by-passengers>.

HMRC estimate that VAT RES refunds cost around £0.5 billion in VAT in 2019 for around 1.2 million non-EU visitors. In 2019 the ONS estimate there were substantially more EU visitors (24.8 million) than non-EU passengers (16.0 million) to the UK. This implies an extension to EU residents would significantly increase the cost by up to an estimated £0.9 billion. This would result in a large amount of deadweight loss by subsidising spending from EU visitors which already happens without a refund mechanism in place, potentially taking the total cost up to around £1.4 billion per annum.

The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales currently affects airports that fly to non-EU destinations. The extension of duty-free sales to EU bound passengers will be a significant boost to all airports in England, Scotland and Wales, including Edinburgh and Glasgow and smaller regional airports which have not been able to offer duty-free to the EU before.

HMRC estimate that around £150 million of VAT is not charged as a result of tax-free airside sales. As with the VAT RES, extending the relief to the EU would significantly increase the cost of the scheme and result in a large amount of deadweight loss by subsidising spending from EU-bound passengers which already happens.

The final costings will be subject to scrutiny by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and will be set out at the next forecast.

The Government also recognises the challenges the aviation sector is facing as it recovers from the impacts of Covid-19 and has supported the sector throughout the pandemic, and continues to do so, including schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees.

■ Eat Out to Help Out Scheme

Kirsten Oswald:

[102855]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total value was of claims made by registered businesses with more than 25 outlets under the Eat Out to Help Out scheme up to 27 August 2020.

Kirsten Oswald:

[102856]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses with more than 25 outlets registered to participate in the Eat Out to Help Out scheme; and how many outlets were registered by those businesses.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC have published data about the number of registered establishments and claims totals and will publish a detailed analysis of the scheme. This will include breakdowns of claims values between small and larger businesses (those with more than 25 establishments).

■ Football: Taxation

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[102675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 28 September 2020 to Question 94333 on Football: taxation, if he will require HMRC to not take action against professional football clubs who find themselves unable to meet their tax obligations as a result of the restrictions imposed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC continue to speak to individual clubs, sporting bodies and DCMS to ensure they can give support to businesses experiencing difficulty paying their liabilities. Where clubs have been unable to pay in full, Time to Pay (TTP) arrangements have been agreed. For those unable to submit acceptable proposals or make any payments, HMRC continue to maintain a dialogue with them.

In accordance with the moratorium introduced as part of the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020, along with other creditors, HMRC cannot currently initiate any winding up action against companies. This is in place until 31 December 2020.

■ Freight

Justin Madders:

[\[100433\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional support will be provided to haulage and logistics companies who are unable to find a customs and brokerage service by 1 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The UK Government's priority during the transition period is supporting traders and the border industry, including hauliers and logistics companies, to understand what actions they need to take to be ready for the end of the transition period.

The UK has a well-established customs intermediaries sector. The sector is varied and consists of a number of different business models, including specific customs agents, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators. Government support of up to £84 million has been designed to meet the needs of the sector to build capacity flexibly by covering training and IT, as well as recruitment.

For companies moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and importing goods into Northern Ireland from the Rest of the World, the Government has set up the Trader Support Service. It will provide education and guidance to traders and submit declarations on their behalf.

■ Gaming Machines: VAT

Scott Benton:

[\[102192\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the outcome of HMRC v The Rank Group PLC; Done Brothers (Cash Betting) Ltd and Others, what steps HMRC has taken to make appropriate repayments to operators; and whether HMRC is prioritising the repayment of operators in a particular order.

Jesse Norman:

Revenue and Customs Brief 5 (2020): VAT treatment on fixed odds betting terminals and gaming machines published on 26 May 2020 (updated on 26 June 2020) sets out the process for claimants in relation to the Rank Group PLC and Done Brothers (Cash Betting) Ltd and Others litigation to be repaid the sums due to them. Repayments have now started and will continue. There has been no prioritisation of any particular claimant.

■ Gift Aid**Bob Blackman:**[\[100957\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will temporarily increase the rate of Gift Aid from 20 per cent to 25 per cent for two years, similar to the Gift Aid Transitional Relief Scheme of 2008.

Bob Blackman:[\[100958\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the minimum estimated cost of £522 million for one month of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the rate of Gift Aid from 20 percent to 25 per cent for two years which the charity sector estimates will cost £325 million.

Bob Blackman:[\[100959\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the rate of Gift Aid to 25 percent for two years.

Kemi Badenoch:

In response to these proposals to increase Gift Aid to 25 per cent I refer the Hon Member to the answer that I gave on 4 September to the Hon Member for Lewisham East (UIN 82365).

■ Gift Aid: Coronavirus**Sarah Champion:**[\[101025\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the findings of the Institute of Fundraising of a £10 billion charity funding gap created by coronavirus, published on 19 August 2020, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of temporarily increasing the rate of Gift Aid for charities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is fully committed to supporting charities through the Gift Aid regime. This relief is tied to the basic rate of tax paid by donors, currently at 20%, so can only be changed if the personal basic tax rate changes.

The Government recognises that the sector is experiencing significant pressures and has made available an unprecedented package of economic support, including a £750 million package specifically for charities.

Hotels: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel: [\[102919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether staff working in accommodation businesses in very high alert level areas will be eligible for support from the extended Job Support Scheme.

Alex Sobel: [\[102920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether travel agents working in very high covid-19 alert level areas will be eligible for support from the extended Job Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The scheme will cover businesses across the UK with premises that are legally required to close as a direct result of government coronavirus restrictions set by one or more of the four governments in the UK, including businesses which have premises restricted to providing delivery and collection services.

If and when new local or national sector closures are announced, new businesses will become eligible for support under the scheme if they are affected.

Further guidance will be issued shortly on eligibility criteria.

Businesses that are open can use the other element of the Job Support Scheme aimed at those able to open but facing lower levels of demand, available from 1 November. The Government will pay a third of hours not worked up to a cap, so that employees earn a minimum of 77% of their normal wages.

In addition to the JSS, the Government has made available a comprehensive package of support for businesses to support their cashflow during the pandemic.

Infrastructure: Finance

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[102694\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the status is of the Infrastructure Finance Review.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to ensuring that businesses and infrastructure projects have access to the finance they need.

In March 2019, the Government launched the Infrastructure Finance Review, to examine how it can best support infrastructure investment in the future. The review will be concluded in the Autumn.

■ Investment Income: Coronavirus

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[100961\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on pension companies of the decision by some UK listed companies to cancel dividend payments to their shareholders.

John Glen:

Whilst dividend income is important for pension schemes, they have long-term investment horizons and a range of other sources including fixed income from corporate and sovereign bonds, rental income and capital gains, although many of these are under strain.

When market conditions recover and firms have rebuilt their balance sheets we anticipate that dividends will be restored.

■ Job Support Scheme

Daisy Cooper:

[\[102936\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the expanded Job Support Scheme announced on 9 October 2020, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending eligibility for that scheme to businesses that have not been forced to close during the covid-19 outbreak but are no longer commercially viable as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Jesse Norman:

Businesses that are open can use the element of the Job Support Scheme aimed at those able to open but at lower levels of demand, available from 1 November. The Government will pay a third of hours not worked, up to a cap, so that employees earn a minimum of 77% of their normal wages.

In addition to the JSS, the Government has made available a comprehensive package of support for businesses to support their cashflow during the pandemic, including loan schemes and tax deferrals. As of 20 September, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILs) and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILs) had together provided £57.31bn of finance to businesses in need.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[102937\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the expanded Job Support Scheme announced on 9 October 2020, whether businesses that have not been forced to close but supply businesses that are closed as a result of covid-19 restrictions are eligible for that extended Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The scheme will cover businesses across the UK with premises that are legally required to close as a direct result of government coronavirus restrictions set by one or more of the four governments in the UK, including businesses which have a premise restricted to providing delivery and collection services.

If and when new local or national sector closures are announced, new businesses will become eligible for support under the scheme if they are affected.

Businesses that are open can use the other element of the Job Support Scheme aimed at those able to open but facing lower levels of demand, available from 1 November. The Government will pay a third of hours not worked up to a cap, so that employees earn a minimum of 77% of their normal wages.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Dave Doogan: [\[101314\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when HMRC plans to respond to the letters of (a) 29 June 2020, (b) 29 July 2020, (c) 7 September 2020 and (d) 30 September 2020 from the hon. Member for Angus on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC have been in contact with Mr Doogan's office in relation to these letters and are now working on their response as a priority. There has been a delay caused by the letters being sent to an incorrect email address.

■ **Public Houses: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[102835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the merits of the proposals for support for pubs and brewers in CAMRA's Save Our Pubs campaign.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is acting to support pubs and address the concerns raised by CAMRA. The Government froze beer duty at the last Budget, and has put in place a business rates holiday, has reduced VAT rates for meals they sell and is providing an unprecedented economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ **Redundancy: Coronavirus**

Stephen Farry: [\[102214\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing additional financial support for people who are made redundant during the covid-19 outbreak.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[102900\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the adequacy of funding for support for people who are unemployed.

Steve Barclay:

The Government recognises that many families will have to rely on the safety net of the welfare system as a result of this crisis. That is why we have introduced significant temporary measures to boost its generosity, including a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance, and an increase to the Universal

Credit housing element so it covers the lowest third of local rents. The OBR estimates our welfare measures will increase spending by over £9 billion this year.

We are also focussing on getting people back into work. We announced unprecedented support in the Plan for Jobs, including £1.2 billion to significantly expand and enhance work search support, including by doubling the number of work coaches, additional investment into the Flexible Support Fund, and making use of external providers to expand support even further. The Government also launched a new £2 billion Kickstart Scheme, creating hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people at risk of long-term unemployment, as well as a guaranteed foundation of support for young people on Universal Credit.

The Plan for Jobs also invested £8.6 billion in infrastructure, decarbonisation and maintenance projects to create jobs.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[\[100294\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what Government support is available for people classed as self-employed solely for the 2019-20 tax year who have experienced a loss of income and are ineligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) continues to be one of the most generous self-employed COVID-19 support schemes in the world.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to include those who began trading after the 2018-19 tax year in the SEISS. This was a very difficult decision and it was taken for practical reasons. The most reliable and up-to-date record of self-employed income is from 2018-19 tax returns. Individuals can submit Income Tax Self-Assessment returns for 2019-20 trading activity, but there would be significant risks for the public purse if the Government relied on these returns for the SEISS.

Those not eligible for the SEISS may still have access to other elements of the financial support package made available by the Government. This package includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants. The Government has also temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance for 2020-21 by £20 per week and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly fallen, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings.

■ Small Businesses: Internet

Esther McVey:

[\[100991\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial support to independent businesses who have limited internet access.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government recognises the importance of digital connectivity both to the economy and to people's lives and is committed to delivering nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible. At Budget we committed £5 billion to support its rollout in the hardest to reach areas. This will benefit homes and businesses across the UK. In addition, we are currently providing vouchers worth up to £3,500 to rural businesses to help them pay connection fees for gigabit-capable broadband.

Furthermore, this autumn the Chancellor has announced a targeted package of measures to support jobs and business through the winter months following the introduction of further measures to control the spread of COVID-19.

■ **Smoking****Owen Thompson:**[\[100479\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the tobacco duty escalator on reducing the prevalence of smoking.

Kemi Badenoch:

No specific assessment has been made. According to the latest ONS data 14% of adults in the UK are smokers, the lowest on record. To ensure that this downward trend continues the Government is committed to maintaining the tobacco duty escalator until the end of the Parliament.

■ **Stamp Duty Land Tax****Peter Kyle:**[\[102883\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2020 to Question 97543 on Housing: Insulation, if he will make it his policy to extend the temporary reduced rate of Stamp Duty Land Tax for home buyers.

Jesse Norman:

To boost the housing market, the Government decided to cut Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) by temporarily increasing the nil rate band of SDLT to £500,000. This applies from 8 July 2020 to 31 March 2021. The Government keeps all taxes under review, including SDLT, but has no plans to extend the relief.

■ **Tax Avoidance****Adam Holloway:**[\[101995\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC has received reports of people receiving incorrect advice from advisers on settlement of the loan charge; and if he will reopen the settlement process for the people affected.

Adam Holloway:[\[101996\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what circumstances are included for HMRC to extend the settlement window for people subject to the Loan Charge after 30 September 2020.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold data on reports from individual taxpayers who may feel they have received incorrect advice from advisers about their settlements. A core principle of the tax system is that an individual is responsible for their own tax affairs. The actions of a third party adviser are not normally considered to be an exceptional circumstance beyond the control of the taxpayer.

HMRC are continuing settlement discussions with a relatively small number of taxpayers who were prevented from meeting the 30 September deadline by exceptional circumstances beyond their control, such as recent hospitalisation.

The criteria HMRC consider for continuing settlement discussions beyond the 30 September deadline are:

- The taxpayer had actively engaged in the settlement process until the occurrence of a factor;
- The factor is entirely outside the control of the taxpayer,
- The factor prevented the taxpayer from settling by 30 September; and
- Absent the factor, the taxpayer would have been able to settle by 30 September, and
- The taxpayer is able, and agrees, to settle within a defined period of no more than 3 months after the 30 September.

Bill Esterson:[\[102774\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many loan charge settlements were (a) offered and (b) agreed during July, August and September 2020.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold aggregate data on when individual taxpayers were issued with settlement offers.

HMRC are currently compiling, analysing and assuring settlement data up to 30 September 2020. HMRC plan to report the number of agreed settlements when they publish their report on how they have implemented the Loan Charge changes following the Independent Loan Charge Review, later this year.

■ Taxis: Coronavirus**Bill Esterson:**[\[102772\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support is available for self-employed taxi drivers who have been told by NHS England to self-isolate due to

underlying health reasons and who have been told that they do not qualify for bounce back loans because they do not have business bank accounts.

John Glen:

The government is committed to supporting self-employed individuals through any period in which they have to self-isolate. Self-employed individuals may be eligible for “new style” Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if they are incapable of work due to Covid-19, including those who are required to self-isolate according to Government guidance. We have made it easier for people to claim new style ESA by removing the seven-day waiting period which means people can get support from day one. If they are on a low-income, they may also be entitled to a £500 self-isolation payment.

Individuals who are self-isolating can also access the wider support which the government has made available to self-employed people. In addition to bounce back loans, self-employed individuals may be eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) which remains open for applications and has recently been extended. The SEISS Grant Extension will last for 6 months, from November 2020 to April 2021.

This support for the self-employed is in addition to a comprehensive welfare offer: according to OBR estimates, the government has injected a further £9.3bn into the welfare system to support individuals who are unable to work or on a low income, including the self-employed. For those on low incomes, the government has relaxed the UC minimum income floor for all self-employed claimants.

The Government launched Bounce Back Loans on 4th May 2020 to ensure that the smallest businesses can access loans of up to £50,000 in a matter of days. However, decisions regarding which products, like business bank accounts, to offer remain at the discretion of lenders, and the Government does not intervene in these decisions.

■ **Tobacco: Excise Duties**

Owen Thompson:

[\[100480\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to increase the level of the tobacco duty escalator on hand-rolling tobacco.

Kemi Badenoch:

All taxes are kept under review and decisions on tobacco duty rates are made by the Chancellor as part of the annual Budget process.

■ **Treasury: Pay**

Philip Davies:

[\[100321\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the biggest pay rise given to someone in his Department was in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms in the last 12 months.

Kemi Badenoch:

From the period of 6th October 2019 to 7th October 2020, the biggest pay rises HM Treasury awarded were: □ In cash terms, £8000, or □ In percentage terms, 7.3%.

To note, the increases above exclude pay rises as a result of promotions or equivalent.

■ UK Trade with EU**Sir Roger Gale:**[\[102652\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether GB issued EORI numbers will be valid in Europe after 31 December 2020.

Jesse Norman:

After 31 December 2020 when the transition period ends, GB prefixed EORI numbers will no longer be valid in Europe.

Businesses exporting goods from, or importing goods into, the UK will need an EORI number from the UK in order to submit a customs declaration to UK customs.

UK businesses which currently trade with non-EU countries will already have an EORI number. If this number starts with “GB” then it was issued by the UK and will continue to be valid for the purposes of submitting customs declarations in the UK from January 2021.

WALES**■ Coronavirus: Wales****Ruth Jones:**[\[102164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on support for businesses in (a) Newport West constituency and (b) Wales affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

This Government has issued £1.116 billion through the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, £303 million through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and £490 million through the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme to support businesses in Wales. In August in Newport West, 11,500 employments were furloughed with a take up rate of 27 per cent.

I have been having discussions across and at all levels of Government to support businesses in Wales and mitigate the impact of the covid-19 pandemic. This includes not only discussions with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, but also businesses within Newport West such as the Compound Semi-Conductor Cluster, Airbus and the Celtic Manor, to drive forward our commitments to secure jobs, stimulate growth and provide opportunities to level-up in Wales – all of which will support economic recovery.

Ruth Jones:

[\[102165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on support for people in (a) Newport West constituency and (b) Wales whose employment has been adversely affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

I have frequent discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on UK-wide schemes such as the Plan for Jobs which will make up to £30 billion available to protect and create jobs UK-wide. This Government has introduced significant and targeted support to people across the UK, including in Wales, to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes issuing £490 million through the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and supporting 401,000 employees who were furloughed.

■ Iron and Steel: Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[102166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent steps the Government has taken to support the steel industry in Wales.

Simon Hart:

We recognise that global economic conditions continue to be challenging for the steel industry and are committed to supporting a productive, vibrant and modern steel sector in the UK. That is why we recently worked to reach an agreement with Celsa which will save hundreds of highly-skilled Welsh jobs.

The Government has put together a far-reaching package of support to help businesses through the coronavirus pandemic. We continue to regularly engage with the steel sector about support mechanisms, especially in dealing with the economic impact of Covid-19.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Pay

Philip Davies:

[\[100327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the biggest pay rise given to someone in her Department was in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms in the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

Within the last 12 months, the largest increase in pay, both in percentage and cash terms, awarded within the Department for Work and Pensions was a 15.8% increase in the amount of £17,700. The recipient was a Senior Civil Servant (SCS) Pay Band 2 member of staff.

The uplift was the result of a pay exception on appointment following a level transfer from another Government Department. This was based on the recipient's high level of skill and experience, their sustained performance, the increased responsibility associated with the role as well as their relative position on the pay range in comparison with their peers. DWP fully complied with the pay exception control process for this increased pay on appointment, meeting all relevant criteria.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Staff**

Ian Lavery:

[\[100391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many members of full time equivalent staff were working in the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit team in January 2020.

Ian Lavery:

[\[100394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full time equivalent staff members of the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) team are dealing with asbestos related IIDB cases.

Mims Davies:

In January 2020, the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff working on the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) Team was 134 FTE.

The number of FTE staff members that deal with asbestos related IIDB Claims as 'Business as Usual' is 23 FTE.

Ian Lavery:

[\[100392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full time equivalent staff members of the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit team have been redeployed to other benefits teams during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff members of the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) team that have been redeployed to other benefits teams during the covid-19 outbreak is 110 FTE. This was in response to a fall- off in IIDB claims and to support the departments other priority work areas. A small number of residual FTE (23) remain on the IIDB team to deal with SRTi cases and customer enquiries.

Ian Lavery:

[\[100393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full time equivalent staff members of the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) team have been dealing with asbestos related IIDB cases only, during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

During the COVID-19 outbreak and whilst IIDB medical assessments have been paused, we have continued to deploy 8 Full Time Equivalent staff members to ensure that the "special rules" cases which do not require a medical assessment have

continued to be processed. All claims received have been progressed to the point of where they are now awaiting a medical assessment.

■ **Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment**

Kirsten Oswald: [\[102853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the criteria is for the issuing of an employment support assessment as a paper form.

Justin Tomlinson:

A paper Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) medical questionnaire form is issued to all ESA claimants that require a work capability assessment. On DWP's website there is a version of the form available which provides claimants with an option to download and complete the form on a computer. This allows the form to be saved and completed in stages.

■ **Food Poverty: Disability**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[102838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of disabled people living in food poverty.

Justin Tomlinson:

We spend over £55 billion a year on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions – up nearly £10 billion since 2010 and more than ever before.

The Department has announced it will be bringing forward a Green Paper on health and disability support, considering issues that disabled people have told us that they want to see addressed. This will explore a wide range of issues linked to health and disability benefits and the wider support that is provided.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Disability**

Marion Fellows: [\[102871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish a Green Paper on disability benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

We spend over £55 billion a year on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions – up nearly £10 billion since 2010 and more than ever before.

The Department has announced it will be bringing forward a Green Paper on health and disability support, considering issues that disabled people have told us that they want to see addressed. This will explore a wide range of issues linked to health and disability benefits and the wider support that is provided.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[102837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to improve access to benefits for terminally ill people.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working at pace across government to bring forward proposals. An evaluation was launched in July 2019 and has identified three themes: the desire for change to the six-month rule, the need to improve consistency and the need to raise awareness of available support.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Age

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[102754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Government's policy is on bringing forward from 2046 the planned increase in the retirement age to 68 for state pension purposes.

Guy Opperman:

Following the 2017 independent review of State Pension age by John Cridland, the Government accepted his recommendation to bring forward the increase to State Pension age to 68 from 2044-46 to 2037-39. Government committed to carry out a further review of State Pension age before legislating to do so, to enable consideration of the latest life expectancy projections. The statutory deadline for the publication for this next Government Review is 2023.

■ Universal Credit

Jamie Stone:

[\[102897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has commissioned research on the potential effect on the mental wellbeing of universal credit claimants of removing the work conditionality and sanctions regime.

Mims Davies:

We have not commissioned research on the potential mental wellbeing of universal credit claimants of removing the conditionality and sanctions regime. We engage with all of our claimants at a personal and individual level and are committed to tailoring support for specific individual needs, including agreeing realistic and structured steps to encourage claimants into or towards the labour market. These requirements are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain appropriate for every claimant. Sanctions are only ever applied where someone fails to comply with these requirements without a good reason.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Missing Persons

Rehman Chishti:

[100359]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of missing (a) adults and (b) children, were recorded as high risk in each month from 1 April 2020 to 1 September 2020.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 October 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office does not hold data on missing person incidents. Annual missing persons statistics, including analysis of age and risk category, are published by the National Crime Agency's Missing Person's Unit. The latest report is for 2018-19 and is available at <https://www.missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/resources/downloads/missing-persons-statistical-bulletins>.

The Government recognises the importance of accurate and timely data on both current and historic missing incidents. We are working with the national policing lead for Missing Persons and the NCA's UK Missing Persons Unit through the Home Office National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP) to deliver a National Register for Missing Persons (NRMP). The NRMP will provide a snapshot of live missing incidents across police forces in England and Wales.

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WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Marion Fellows:

[\[102871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish a Green Paper on disability benefits.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 16 October 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Justin Tomlinson:

~~We spend over £55 billion a year on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions — up nearly £10 billion since 2010 and more than ever before.~~

~~The Department has announced it will be bringing forward a Green Paper on health and disability support, considering issues that disabled people have told us that they want to see addressed. This will explore a wide range of issues linked to health and disability benefits and the wider support that is provided.~~

The Department has announced it will be bringing forward a Green Paper on health and disability support, considering issues that disabled people have told us that they want to see addressed. We will update the house in due course.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ THE HUMAN MEDICINES (CORONAVIRUS AND INFLUENZA) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2020

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill): [\[HCWS520\]](#)

The primary objective of our policy is to support the expansion of the annual seasonal flu vaccination campaign and to support the successful roll-out of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine. Throughout the Coronavirus outbreak, the government has brought in the right measures at the right time, based on the most relevant and up-to-date scientific advancements and advice. As the UK enters the 'flu season' where domestic transmission is rising, it is important that the Government can respond swiftly and effectively to the current situation.

The independent Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) will advise the UK government on the safety, quality and efficacy of any vaccine; no vaccine will be deployed unless stringent standards have been met through a comprehensive clinical trial programme. The preferred route to enable deployment of any vaccine, including new vaccines for COVID-19, remains through the usual marketing authorisation (product licensing) processes.

In the interests of patient safety and bringing the pandemic to an end which will allow life to restore to normality, the Human Medicine (Coronavirus and Influenza) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 will come into force, for the most part, on 3 November 2020, although some provisions need to be brought into force on the day after they are laid before Parliament. Our plan is to bolster the safeguards to product authorisation and to improve access to necessary vaccines in order to protect the public ahead of the winter and beyond; and ultimately reduce mortality.

The Regulations introduce measures to support the safe future mass rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine, and the expansion of the annual seasonal flu vaccination programme, and include bringing the 5 main changes into effect:

1. Reinforcing temporary authorisation measures to provide for the attaching of conditions, a technical change in order to make sure that any unlicensed products that the government recommends for deployment in response to certain public health threats must meet required safety and quality standards;
2. Expanding the workforce able to administer Covid-19 and flu vaccines to improve access and protect the public, including by new immunisation protocols for COVID-19 and flu vaccines;
3. Rationalising the scope of the pre-existing partial immunity from civil liability for the pharmaceutical companies whose unlicensed products are recommended for use by the government in response to certain public health threats, and also extending

that partial immunity to all members of the additional workforce that could be allowed to administer temporarily authorised vaccinations under the new immunisation protocols;

4. Ensuring that treatments used in response to certain specific types of public health threat can be promoted by advertisements to the public as part of national campaigns;
5. The provision of an exemption from the need for a wholesale dealer's licence to allow the swift and safe transfer of COVID-19 and flu vaccines, and other medicines for treatment of pandemic disease, in response to patient need, by NHS and armed services providers at the end of the supply chain.

If a COVID-19 vaccine is ready for deployment prior to 1 January 2021, these measures will bolster existing temporary authorisation powers that allow the MHRA to consider approving its use, before a full product licence is granted - provided it is proven to be safe and effective during the extensive clinical trials. The measures are especially necessary in the context of the transition period because until its end any full product licence for a potential Covid-19 vaccine must be granted by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The UK government has sought views on proposals to make changes, in conjunction with the Minister of Health in Northern Ireland, to the Human Medicine Regulations 2012. The Department has further welcomed views from any interested individual or organisation through a public consultation which ran from 28 August and closed on 18 September, also holding discussions about the proposals with specialists and key stakeholders in tandem. We welcome the participation of all individuals and organisations who contributed to the consultation and received over 188,000 responses. We analysed these responses and based on feedback made three key changes to the content of the legislation, which are explained in the Explanatory Memorandum published alongside the instrument.

The Explanatory Memorandum published with the instrument also explains why some of the provisions of this instrument breach the rule that provisions of statutory instruments subject to the negative procedure should normally be laid 21 days before the instrument comes into force. The measures that are being brought into force in breach of the 21-day rule are essentially permissive and enabling. The priority action is to support the annual flu vaccination rollout, delaying their implementation could increase the incidence of the influenza in the UK. Currently a safe effective vaccine for Covid-19 to deploy is subject to the outcome of clinical trials. However, any delay to the annual vaccination rollout would hamper an important aspect of the COVID-19 fightback.

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will advise the UK government on which COVID-19 vaccine/s the UK should use, and on the priority groups to receive the vaccine based on the best available clinical, modelling and epidemiological data. This will depend on the properties of the vaccine, those most at need (including health and care 'frontline' workers) and the medical circumstances of individuals. Updated JCVI advice can be found [here](#).

TRANSPORT■ **Rail update****Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):****[[HCWS518](#)]**

I am updating the House that the Department for Transport has negotiated a further Direct Award for the Cross Country rail franchise.

I am pleased to inform the house that the Government has signed a new contract with Arriva to ensure vital train services continue across the UK's most extensive rail network. Stretching from Aberdeen to Penzance and from Stansted Airport to Cardiff, CrossCountry's network is the most geographically extensive passenger rail franchise in Great Britain. It calls at over 100 stations and connects seven of Britain's ten largest cities.

The new agreement means Arriva CrossCountry, which has run the service since 2007, will continue to operate the franchise for three more years until October 2023. This brings stability to CrossCountry services and provides certainty for passengers and staff as the future direction of rail reform takes shape.

Vital, long-distance rail services, which people across the length of Great Britain rely on, will continue to run and support the UK's recovery from COVID-19, thanks to this new contract. As people return to the railway, passengers will benefit from more capacity and operational staff, along with new measures to help passengers with disabilities, aligned with current best practice across the rail industry.

The contract also has a renewed focus on tackling environmental impacts. To reduce diesel emissions, Arriva CrossCountry will trial the use of electrical shore supplies when Turbostars are in depots for cleaning, and on-train batteries when Voyagers enter and leave stations. We will continue to work with the owners of the Voyagers to ensure engines are turned off when at platforms.

This new contract complements the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) announced in September, in place for up to 18 months, where the Government pays train companies a small management fee to keep services running through the pandemic.

The contract will see the Government take on the revenue and cost risk associated with the franchise and pay Arriva a performance-linked fee to operate the service, incentivising the company to deliver improvements to operational performance, passenger experience and service quality.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Update on In-Work Progression Commission: Call for Evidence

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

[[HCWS519](#)]

I established the In-Work Progression Commission - led by Baroness McGregor-Smith - in March this year as part of this government's commitment to levelling up opportunities for those who want to progress from lower paid jobs into higher paid work.

In response to Covid-19, our focus is getting people back into work and our £30bn Plan for Jobs will support hundreds of thousands of people of all ages do this. Now however is also the time to lay the groundwork for the future when people will be able and striving to progress.

The Commission wants to hear from all sectors, including businesses, charities, think-tanks, advocacy groups and other community focused organisations as well as from individuals who have or have not progressed out of low pay. We have launched a call for evidence, details of which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-and-good-practice-on-in-work-progression/call-for-evidence-and-good-practice-on-in-work-progression>

We want written contributions that highlight the challenges to progression in low-paid sectors and how best to support talented people to rise through the ranks. A copy of the call for evidence document will be placed in the House Library and responses can be sent to progression.commission@dwp.gov.uk.